

We do not have them all yet

Address by Dirk Weissleder to the jubilee worship of June 18, 2016 at the Liebfrauenkirche in Langewiesen, upon the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Familienverband WEISSLEDER

Dear Cornelia Weißleder,
dear Dr. Huß,
dear WEISSLEDER,
dear friends of the Familienverband WEISSLEDER, dear guests, dear members of honor,

Dear ladies and gentlemen,

In these weeks we celebrate 25 years since the founding of our Familienverband WEISSLEDER. A quarter of a century with many events now lies behind us. We are grateful that we've kept together in these 25 years; we are thankful for 25 meetings in a row, and we use this silver family meeting to celebrate — but also to think of those who cannot come to be with us today, for different reasons. Herewith we think of our American Whiteleather cousins (and others with variants of the name) on this special day. We think also of all those who guided us through the last 25 years, but who have since passed away.

For all of those I mention our co-founder and member of honor, Albert Weißleder, who on May 19, 1991 did celebrate our founding worship in Oehrenstock because this church at that time could not be used for it. Today, 25 years later, you, dear Cornelia Weißleder, as his daughter you celebrate a worship along with pastor Dr. Huß because of today's silver family meeting. All this means so much to us. And already today we invite those of you present to attend our celebration worship at our 30th jubilee in 2021, to our 40th anniversary in 2021 and to our 50th anniversary in 2041. But of course, you are invited to every single family meeting between those events as well.

When I started my very first genealogical research (in 1982), I only knew six WEISSLEDER — my grandparents, my parents, my sister

and myself — having this family name. The roots of the family were at that time unreachable in the East of the Harz mountains. Thus the division of Germany (1945-1990) had influenced also my family. After the opening of the borders (in 1989/90), intensive contacts between people named WEISSLEDER developed outside of my greater family.

It was Jürgen's thought to form a family association, based upon all the reactions to our letters (at the close of 1989/90). This is a terrific idea that has carried us forward until today. Founded in 1991 in Langewiesen, we as the family association WEISSLEDER in the following year (1992) learned of the Andrew Whiteleather Reunion in Ohio, meeting annually since 1898! We saw we could revitalize a connection between Germany and America that had been interrupted for 38 years, and of which only a few in Germany knew.

Now, I could share many anecdotes from these 25 years, but I would like instead to pursue the decisive question: "What are we actually doing when we research on the surname WEISSLEDER, do we search for each single person named WEISSLEDER and document them?"

Through all these years it has become clear that WEISSLEDER often has been mentioned in connection with mining: decent miners, and later mining directors of merit such as Edmund Weißleder, who died in 1901. After his death in Staßfurt, a monument was erected to honor his memory as a strong proponent for mining security, and for social responsibility towards miners and their families. Today a street called Weißlederweg remembers this great man.

For a very long time I have asked myself, what could symbolize our worldwide name research and our documentation of persons of the name who have passed on — so that we may describe with a picture what we actually do? Now I know.

This afternoon we open our exhibition "FamilyMine WEISSLEDER." At last I have found a way to describe our restless pursuit so perfectly! Through our "mining" of these many documents we attempt to reconstruct the historical families WEISSLEDER, and we search for every single lost son and daughter of each family bearing this name.

Be it as emigrant to the New World, or as fallen soldier within the two world wars; all are remembered....

We want to bring back each discovery into the historical consciousness of our families today, and to save those departed from being forgotten. We are searching for every little hint – in any time, at any place, to build up these connections.

Sometimes it takes years to find the decisive hint that points us towards answering some important questions that have vexed us. For this reason, in a few moments in front of the mayor's house, we will not only take our traditional family picture but also will pose behind a sheet of paper containing these words: "We do not have them all yet."¹

Not to forget about individuals is a special form of treasuring them, yes, but as an expression of mourning it is also a symbol of our love overcoming mortality.

25 years is an important milestone in the history of WEISSLEDER. Our family association for itself, without any doubt, has already become a part of history. 25 years in a row we have met at different places and these 25 years have not been without profound effects – both within our families and beyond. All I have learned from this experience I have let influence my work within the two umbrella organizations I represent in and for Germany, as well as for contacts abroad. I am very grateful for that.

Each single family association meeting is for itself something special, because every attendee simultaneously represents his whole Family. And, be assured, it is all about Family — about a structure that transcends generations. Family is immortal; Family is forever. Family survives catastrophies and wars. The reason is that every Family comes from many single families.

Jürgen has described all of this perfectly in this book "Familienautobahn" (family highway). I am grateful that today not only my parents but also (my wife) Katrin's parents, not only our children but also my nephew Colin Hanusa, are part of this family meeting.

Perhaps our surname WEISSLEDER tells us the following: We should maintain our Family unity by remaining as closely connected as is possible.

I am not afraid when I contemplate the future of our family association WEISSLEDER. Far too often we think about the future negatively. But besides the dangers there are big opportunities. We are not only finding WEISSLEDER worldwide, but now the internet allows us to be in closer contact. We have only first to find them, and then we must resolve to keep in touch. We must continuously strive to build bridges between and among our distant Family members. WEISSLEDER is not a museum, but rather a vibrant organism that lives through our activities.

We must always look at the whole. Our surname is the vehicle that carries us through hard times and brings us together. WEISSLEDER – a name connects. So unity is our motto. An old Chinese saying explains: the best moment to plant a tree is 20 years ago. We have followed this advice. We had our start 25 years ago!

In the future we will find more individuals of our name. In the future we still may strike further historical mosaic stones in our FamilyMine WEISSLEDER. All of this extends beyond our own lives: it all has been there before us, and it all will be there after us. This makes it so fascinating.

I am thankful for wonderful experiences within these past 25 years; many hopefully might still follow. I wish hours of harmony in the circle of Family in the years before us.

I close in the miners' language: Glück auf!²

¹ In German language „ nicht alle haben“ is a friendly saying for “being crazy,” so a double meaning here: We do not have them all yet, and we are all a little crazy!

² The miners' saying for wishing a safe return to daylight!