

Retracing tracks by a young American...

April 14th, 2013, we introduced the American documentary, "16 Photographs from Ohrdruf" in the women and family center in Arnstadt. My husband Douglas Dillard helped me with the translation so that all visitors could understand. About 20 interested ladies came, as well as two gentlemen. We were cordially greeting by Mrs. Schmidt. The press also was present.

The film shows the tracks Mathew Nash retraced when his grandfather took 16 photos, made shortly after liberation. His grandfather, Donald Johnson was as a medic during the liberation of the Ohrdruf camp there and made the photos. He kept stored away until his death. Nash found them many years later and broke the silence.

Together we watched the movie and sometimes it was very quiet in the room. Witnesses, veterans and historians came to speak in the film. The camp, the survivors and the horror on the photos, which were shown during the movie, were very present. After the viewing, a discussion with witnesses took place. The silence of the grandfather in the movie also found some parallels.

A lady among us explained that her grandson is currently serving in Afghanistan and that he doesn't speak about his experiences neither. Jürgen Ludwig from Arnstadt and a community worker from Gehren talked about the S III camp, the construction sites and emphasized that many questions were still open.

Almost every visitor knew about the Jonastal, as they came from the region around Arnstadt. I explained, as member of the Jonastal Association, the work of our association and that the documentation center can be visited.

Critical questions also asked, especially as to camps in our current history. Why does Guantanamo exist? Why is there so little information to be found about the Jonastal in the American archives? Even when we were not able to answer all questions, it felt good to know that the documentary touched the viewers present.

Our presentation in the women and family center showed, once again, that people haven't forgotten the events during the war and that they have a keen interest in events that are happening now. This is a good thing.

If you want to know more about Mathew Nash and his movie, you can visit the documentation center of the Jonastal Association in Arnstadt.

Ute Dillard