This story starts with “a very strange phone call.” Someone from Germany was trying to contact Carol Kashan of Owings Mills. He had her grandfather’s driver’s license. A license that had been confiscated from her grandfather, Leo Baneman, when he was arrested 80 years ago on Kristallnacht, Nov. 9, 1938.

The stranger, who wouldn’t remain a stranger for long, was Manfred Brüsmale-Lambrecht, a high school history teacher in Lichtenfels, Germany. Baneman’s license, along with a dozen others, had been discovered in late 2017 in a tattered envelope, yellowed with age, deep in the bowels of a government building in Lichtenfels. The licenses were turned over to district administrator Christian Meißen, who decided that instead of burying them in another file, he wanted the stories of the 13 to be told. So he walked the papers a few hundred yards from his office to his former school and asked the headmaster if he might be interested in a research project.

He was, and a few months later in January, Carol’s phone rang.

“Baltimore Hebrew called me and said would it be OK if they contacted me,” Carol said. Brüsmale-Lambrecht had found her grandfather’s name on one of BHC’s online memorial lists. “That was a very strange phone call, but I was really excited.”

From that point, Carol and her husband Brian said there was a flurry of emails, photos and documents flying back and forth, including an image of her grandfather’s driver’s license.

“When I first saw the picture of my grandfather on the internet, I started to cry and I felt so excited and happy to see it,” Carol remembered. “But then it was like a mix of emotions. I was so happy to be able to get it, but so angry at why I had to get it.”

THE BANEMANS
A decorated German army veteran, by 1938 Leo Baneman was a successful middle-class Jewish businessman in Burgkundstadt, a town about 10 miles from Lichtenfels, east of Frankfurt and north of Nuremberg. He and his wife Martha and their 12-year-old daughter, Edith, lived in a comfortable home and were able to take family vacations around Germany and to Italy and Czechoslovakia.

In 1937, before the Nazis tightened the noose, Leo and his sister visited the U.S. to see her children. There they met Martin Kohn of Baltimore’s Hochschild, Kohn & Co. department stores, who would later help sponsor the family’s escape. Kohn urged Baneman to stay in Baltimore.

“My father said, ‘I still have my wife and my daughter over there, I’m going back,’” recalled Leo’s daughter Edith, years later. “But after the situation in 1938, well, he was ready to go.”

Carol, who is Edith’s daughter, still has a letter her grandfather wrote from jail wishing Edith happy birthday. “I don’t think he was in jail long because he had an army medal,” Carol said. “If you had the medal, you got out early. And if you had a sponsor, they let you out.”

Kristallnacht convinced Baneman the time had come. After his release from jail, Baneman immediately began making
plans to emigrate. But the U.S. was not accepting refugees, so the family took a ship to Cuba in 1939, where they lived for about six months before heading to Baltimore. Here, they settled on the west side in a Jewish neighborhood near Callow Avenue and Whitelock Street. The couple first got odd jobs at hat factories to try to make ends meet and took in boarders.

“It wasn’t easy to start, we had to start from scratch, we didn’t have the money,” Edith recalled.

After setting up a clothing business, the family was able to buy a home and moved to Park Heights Terrace around 1942.

Edith went to Western High School and married Larry Goldschmitt in 1947. He was a German refugee who had escaped at 16 and came to the U.S. alone. His brother also managed to get out, but his parents and sister did not.

Larry was successful in the drapery business and the couple had two children, Norman and Carol.

### 13 Führerscheine

Carol emailed and scanned as much family information as she could find to send to Brorsamle-Lambrecht and his students, who eventually mounted an exhibit of the project called “13 Führerscheine” (13 Driver’s Licenses) and published a book.

“Once he started to get information from me, he asked would I come [to Lichtenfels] to give this driver’s license,” Carol recalled. “And I said yes, I would. And I was the first and the only for quite a while.”

Some family members of the license holders were initially suspicious of the effort by the German students, but last month, in addition to Carol and her husband Brian, eight other family members traveled to Lichtenfels for a ceremony and the opening of the exhibit.

As Carol and Brian traveled from Baltimore, seven descendants of Arthur and Sigmund Marx traveled from New Jersey, New York, Boston, Florida and Texas and one descendant of Jenny and Josef Kraus flew in from Argentina.

The exhibit includes 13 large vertically displayed banners with enlargements of the driver’s license photos and photos of the homes people left behind, as well as pictures of the families and their descendants. Leo Baneman’s banner includes a photo of Martha and Edith aboard a ship, pictures of their Baltimore home, their car and photos of Carol and Norman and their families — the lineage made possible by the Banemans’ escape from Germany.

“These people, the crazy part of it was, they were German citizens,” Brian Kashaen said. “Forget that they were Jewish. They were German citizens. They fought in the German wars. They got medals of honor and they were persecuted nonetheless. It didn’t matter. Being Jewish [eliminated] any good that you had ever done.”

In an interview for German television, Meissner, the town administrator, said it was clear as soon as the licenses were found that young people should be
involved. “It meant taking a closer look. It was quite astonishing that in some cases, only the names of the owners were known,” he said. “For some, it was the first time that we got to see photos. It is yet another contribution to research. But more and continual research is necessary.”

Francesca Schuetz, 17, the student assigned to Leo Baneman, was excited to be a part of the family research project from the start.

“I was more than just interested in searching and finding out about the individual stories the Jews had to endure,” she said via email. “Of course I knew that it can be possible to find out very sad content, too. The Second World War is a terrible part of human history.”

Francesca said that reading the first response from Carol about her grandfather was very emotional.

“That was the point where I realized that we were touching people and really discovering Leo Baneman’s story,” she said. “During the project, we used a lot the word ‘goosebumps,’ as it describes well how we felt the whole time.”

Francesca said that she and her classmates hope that the book and the exhibit reach as many people as possible. “This is a part of human history everybody should know about and everybody should know that the Jews were not just a mass of people but individuals with individual lives and stories,” she said. “This is a part of our history we can never forget, but we can make sure it never happens again.”

For Brösamle-Lambrecht, the rise of right-wing extremism and anti-Semitism in Germany was a motivating factor, as well as the lack of public knowledge of the 750-year history of Lichtenfels’ Jewish community.

“We wanted to teach the public about the lives of these citizens. We only knew their birth dates — nothing else. An exhibition was first choice because it offered the chance to spread this topic,” he said via email. “We planned it to be a traveling exhibit. And it is — eight high schools in our region have ordered it to be presented for one week to their students.”

As a teacher, Brösamle-Lambrecht said it was a “gift” to see his 17-year-old students take to the task with engagement and interest and become experts in investigation and presentation.

“The first reactions of descendants we found — we won’t forget that,” he said. “For me it was and still is an incredible experience to meet those 10 descendants here in Germany and still have the intensive contact with them. This was an emotional avalanche for everybody involved in it. We made friends from the first moment on.”

Three hundred people were invited to the exhibit’s private opening ceremony in Lichtenfels, which the Kashans and the other descendants attended. The first public exhibition, in Lichtenfels’ former synagogue, ran for 13 hours and saw about 600 visitors. The show was covered by local media and shared on social media. Meanwhile, Betina Kraus, the descendant of Jenny and Josef Kraus, is making a radio report in Buenos Aires, where she lives.

‘THEY’RE LISTENING’

Back in Baltimore, the Kashans are still in frequent contact with Brösamle-Lambrecht, Francesca and many of the descendants they met and befriended on their trip to Germany. They said they were treated like “royalty” in Lichtenfels, getting tours of the city and given the

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— Francesca Schuetz, student

Above, from left: Carol and Brian Kashan in Lichtenfels with student Francesca Schuetz; Carol and Brian with Manfred Brösamle-Lambrecht; and Carol in front of her great-grandfather’s home holding a photo of him in the same spot 100 years ago.
Brian and Carol look at a program from the “13 Fuhrerscheine” exhibit. Carol speaks German from growing up in a household that spoke the language. Eight of the 13 escaped Germany, while five were murdered in the Holocaust. Top: Leo’s driver’s license. Above: Martha’s Jewish ID.

honor of signing Lichtenfel’s “Golden Book,” a ceremonial task reserved only for important visiting dignitaries.

They were impressed with the German people who attended the event, who were serious and engaged by the exhibit.

“There were a lot of people,” Carol said. “And they were all very, very nice. You could tell were really interested in these lives.”

“They didn’t just show up because it was the politically correct thing to do,” Brian said. “They were looking, they were reading. But everyone, I think, were surprised that the kids did so much, well. It looked professional. They just did it beautifully.”

During the visit, they also found the Banemans’ home, now a pharmacy, and took photos in front of Carol’s great-grandfather’s house. They also wanted to visit a concentration camp, so Francesca’s parents drove them to Buchenwald, about 100 miles away.

Since that “strange” phone call in January, Carol said the entire experience has affected her deeply.

“It changed my whole life. But I didn’t want people to see what we did as a ‘you’re going to forgive and forget’ kind of thing. I’m happy that this generation is going to remember,” she said. “Those are 14 students that maybe have changed their minds about Jewish people, or any people, that are different than them.”

Brian is as emotional as Carol about the experience, which he agrees “changed so many lives.”

“It gave you hope to see young people that are going to fight your fight,” he said. “I think reassurance is a good word. It’s not forgiveness. It’s not forgetting. It’s reassurance that there are some people that do good in the world. And these young kids picked up the baton and ran with it.”

“It’s more than about Carol’s family,” he added. “It’s about the families whose driver’s licenses weren’t found and it’s about the families that didn’t have driver’s licenses and all the other things that developed. I just want the story to be told.”

Carol, who was never much of a history fan prior to this, is now immersed in a family history she never paid much attention to before. Her mother, Edith, 92, is helping Carol identify family in the many old photos she unearthed for the project. And the Kashans’ two children, Lauren and David, although no longer living at home, are hearing the stories, too.

“I’m visual. I have to see it,” Carol said. “When we went there and we saw all these things, I learned so much. And now when I tell people the stories, they are tuned in, and they’re listening.”