

## **Welcome reception, held by Robert Boehm, 10/02/2025**

Dear relatives,

I warmly welcome you to our 2025 family reunion.

This is a very special moment for me, after so much planning, to see you here in person.

I especially welcome Gerhard, the oldest member of the group, and also Margitta, along with Bill, Beowulf, and Leif, who traveled the longest way to be here today. Thank you for coming. Family reunions have become something of a tradition in our family. Until the war, Glaubitten was the family center of Julius and Gertrud Boehm and their children, grandchildren, and siblings with their families. After the war, a large part of our family lived in Berlin and Hamburg. Over the next decades, however, our family spread across many locations in Germany and around the world. This is how the idea of organizing family reunions came about so that we could come together again in a larger circle.

The first large family reunion took place in 1976 in Waldeck, bringing together all the descendants of Julius and Gertrud, as well as their siblings on their mother's side (the von Petzinger family). Twenty-four years later, in 2000, my parents organized another family reunion in Bad Sooden-Allensbach. Here, as is still the case today, the circle of participants was limited to the direct descendants of Julius and Gertrud. At that time, the idea was raised, albeit jokingly, to organize another reunion in 25 years, and Karin and I, the youngest participants at the time, were nominated for the organization. Even though this idea was meant more as a joke, it has always remained in the back of my mind.

In 2023, I decided to attempt the task of organizing a family reunion in 2025. Through my professional career, I'm used to organizing academic conferences, and I've developed a certain enjoyment of it. I received crucial support, ideas, and practical help with the organization from my wife Ulla, whom I would like to thank sincerely at this point.

I first mentioned the idea when visiting relatives in Hamburg for a meal at the Teufelsbrücker Kajüt in 2023. The positive response at the time encouraged me to make the plan more concrete, and so here we are today – 25 years after Bad Sooden.

Our families continue to live scattered across Germany and other countries, and contact between many of us has since broken down or is at least very sporadic.

Certainly, such a family reunion cannot restore the closeness and intensive contact that existed in former time. But it is an opportunity. An opportunity for the younger ones among us to get to know each other, to renew previous contacts and to reminisce about our family roots together, but also to develop a perspective for shaping our future family life, also with the help of modern forms of communication.

So let's take advantage of this opportunity in the coming days! Let's do something for family cohesion.

The first step to fill this opportunity with life are already done by all of you who are standing here and have thus expressed your interest in this family. You have taken the time, incurred the expense and travel. All of you – all of us want to experience family.

Family is also an invisible bond that connects us all – the bond of our common ancestors and our shared memories of past meetings, celebrations, and mutual visits, perhaps also the memory of Glaubitten or stories about it.

Of the potentially possible living descendants of Julius and Gertrud, almost 50% have gathered here today – not a "coalition of the willing," as we sometimes encounter in politics, but a "coalition of the interested." With this in mind, I wish us much interest and joy in each other and in our shared family history over the next three days – in past and in future.

Now we come to something more practical: the program.

I devised this program in advance to give our time together a certain structure and to ensure that as many aspects as possible are taken into account. It should provide space for shared memories and discussions about a shared future. But there should also be room for shared experiences – a group hike is on the agenda, as well as an excursion to Lorsch Abbey, or rather, a reconstructed Carolingian estate. All program items are deliberately formulated as options – everyone is welcome to participate, but no one is forced to. The hotel and the surrounding countryside offer an alternative opportunity to retreat if things get too much or too strenuous.