

Feminist revisits her birth country

By **ABBY WEINGARTEN**
Correspondent

As an internationally known Jewish feminist and author, German-born **Sonia Pressman Fuentes** has spent her life committed to humanitarianism.

From Sept. 4 to 11, for the first time in more than 30 years, the Sarasota activist and senior returned to her hometown of Berlin for the "Jewish Life in Germany" tour.

She dined with leading women's rights activists in Germany and Belgium, and retraced her family's 1934 journey from Berlin to Antwerp to the United States.

It was an emotional undertaking to say the least, but Fuentes achieved her goal: She left with a profound understanding of civil rights abroad.

"I had mixed feelings going to Germany; I felt that way in 1978 when I went there as a speaker for the U.S. Information Agency," Fuentes said. "You're never there without being conscious of what happened there. But I hadn't been there since the wall came down."

Fuentes wrote the book "Eat First — You Don't Know What They'll Give You: The Adventures of an Immigrant Family and Their Feminist Daughter."

She left Berlin with her immediate family in 1933 to escape the Holocaust.

During her September trip, Fuentes met **Pola Adler**, a Holocaust survivor who lived in her family's same Jewish neighborhood from 1933 to 1934.

While in Berlin, Fuentes dined with two women professors, **Eva Holst** and **Sabine Berghahn**, at an Italian restaurant called La Cantina.

They discussed progress in Germany vis-à-vis progress in the United States with regard to women's rights, Fuentes said. Fu-

entes also met feminist **Leona Detiege**.

"It went very well, and I think we all enjoyed it," Fuentes said.

"Sabine raised a question about the progress in hiring and promoting women professors in law school, since I discussed the high percent of women students in law school," she continued. "We also discussed women judges, and I sent her an article I wrote on that subject while I was still in Berlin."

From Germany, on Sept. 11, Fuentes headed to Antwerp and talked to **Philip Heylen**, the city's vice mayor for culture and tourism.

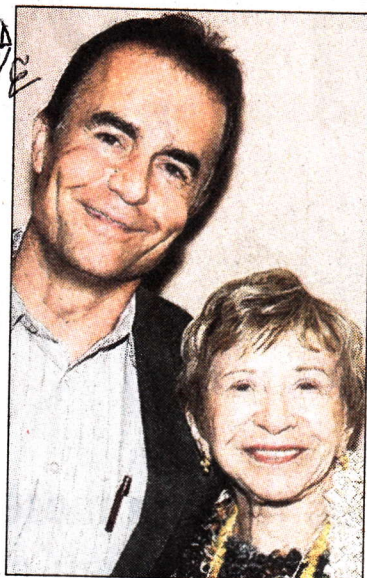
The Red Star Line Museum is currently being constructed in Antwerp, due to open in the spring of 2013, and will feature a permanent exhibit about Fuentes' family, which came to America on the Red Star Line's S.S. Westernland. Fuentes is one of the few surviving passengers.

In Brussels, Belgium, Fuentes perused her parents' original files at the Royal Archives.

Fuentes' overseas trip was rife with educational encounters, but one of the most eye-opening experiences was her tour of Germany.

The group visited the site of the Wannsee Conference, where 15 head Nazis brainstormed Hitler's "final solution." They also toured the new museum, Topography of Terror, built on the site of the former Gestapo headquarters, and the Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp in the Oranienburg suburb of Berlin, where, in one six-week period, 10,000 prisoners were executed one by one with a gun, Fuentes said.

Witnessing the atrocities was a heartwrenching experience for Fuentes, but there also was another view.



Sonia Pressman Fuentes poses with Dr. Bernd Wollschlaeger at the commemoration of Kristallnacht at the Congregation for Humanistic Judaism in Sarasota. She arranged for Wollschlaeger to speak to the congregation. His father was a top German tank commander in the Wehrmacht in World War II and received the Iron Cross from Adolf Hitler. When Bernd Wollschlaeger learned of his father's sympathies with the Nazis, he converted to Judaism and moved to Israel for a time. He now practices medicine in North Miami Beach and is active in Jewish organizations.

COURTESY PHOTO

"I was impressed with the tremendous effort the German government is making to be sure the Holocaust is not forgotten in Germany," she said.

It was a comfort to her, Fuentes said, as that has been always been one of her life's great missions.

Winner named in car show at Southside Village

Peter and Sylvia Clark won the grand prize winners of the use of a Ferrari for a weekend or \$1,000 at the first Southside Village Sports Exotic Classic Antique Car Show on Sunday.

The Clarks decided to receive the \$1,000 check as their prize.

The event benefitted The Life