

KINO
INTERNATIONAL

HBO/CINEMAX
DOCUMENTARY FILMSSM

PRESENTS



watermarks^H

NY Press Contact: Rodrigo Brandão at Kino International
(212) 629-6880 xt. 12 or rodrigo@kino.com

LA Press Contact: Jordan Moore - jordan@laemml.com / (310) 478-1041 xt.208

All Other Markets: Emily Brunt at Kino International
(212) 629-6880 xt. 14 / ebrunt@kino.com

PRESSBOOK

KINO INTERNATIONAL · SUITE 503 · 333 W. 39th STREET · NY, NY, 10018 · TEL (212) 629-6880 · FAX (212) 714-0871 · rodrigo@kino.com

KINO

I N T E R N A T I O N A L

CREW LIST

Director/Writer – Yaron Zilberman
Producers – Yonatan Israel, Yaron Zilberman
Co-Producer – Philippa Kowarsky
Director of Photography – Tom Hurwitz
Sound Recordist – Tully Chen
Editors – Yuval Shar and Ruben Korenfeld
Executive Producers – Paul Rozenberg, Amir Ben-Zion, Mojdeh Danial and Shlomo Israel

KINO INTERNATIONAL PRESENTS:

WATERMARKS

Production companies:

Zadig Production (France)
Jetlag Productions (France)
Yofi Films (Israel)
Girls Club Film Project (U.S.)
Cinephil (Israel)

Co-producers

ARTE (Germany/France)
ORF (Austria)

In association with

HBO/CINEMAX
DOCUMENTARY FILMS

Keshet Broadcast (Israel)

WATERMARKS

DIRECTED BY YARON ZILBERMAN
ISRAEL / 2004 / COLOR
84 MINUTES
STEREO / 1.1:85

KINO

I N T E R N A T I O N A L

WATERMARKS

Synopsis

Watermarks is the story of the champion women swimmers of the legendary Jewish sports club, Hakoah Vienna. Hakoah ("The Strength" in Hebrew) was founded in Vienna in 1909 in response to the notorious Aryan Paragraph, which forbade Austrian sports clubs from accepting Jewish athletes. Its founders were eager to popularize sport among a community renowned for such great minds as Freud, Mahler and Zweig, but traditionally alien to physical recreation. Hakoah rapidly grew into one of Europe's biggest athletic clubs, while achieving astonishing success in many diverse sports. In the 1930s Hakoah's best-known triumphs came from its women swimmers, who dominated national competitions in Austria. After the Anschluss, the annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany in 1938, the Nazis shut down the club. The swimmers managed to flee the country before the war broke out, thanks to an escape operation organized by Hakoah's functionaries.

Sixty-five years later, director Yaron Zilberman meets the members of the women's swim team in their homes around the world, and arranges for them to have a reunion in their old swimming pool in Vienna, a journey that evokes memories of youth, femininity, and strengthens lifelong bonds. Told by the swimmers, now in their eighties, Watermarks is about a group of young girls with a passion to be the best. It is the saga of seven outstanding athletes who still swim daily as they age with grace.

Watermarks visits Trude (Platcek) Hirschler, the Israeli co-chairperson of Hakoah veterans' organization; Elisheva (Schmidt) Susz, a renowned child psychotherapist from Tel-Aviv; Hanni (Deutsch) Lux who tells the story of her sister, Judith (Deutsch) Haspel, Austria's greatest swimmer who paid dearly for her refusal to compete in the 1936 Olympics in Nazi Berlin; Greta (Wertheimer) Stanton, a professor of Social Work from New-Jersey; the elegant Ann-Marie (Pick) Pisker from London; Anni (Wagner) Lampl from LA who despite being visually impaired insisted on joining this reunion; and Nanne (Winter) Selinger, from New York, who was the only swimmer to return to live in Vienna; she left when Kurt Waldheim was elected President of Austria.

KINO

I N T E R N A T I O N A L

WATERMARKS —Director's Note—

Three years ago, for the first time, I was executive producing a documentary project about the greatest soccer players of the century. During this process I first encountered the Hakoah Vienna Sport Club in the form of a small paragraph in a soccer history book. The passage mentioned a Jewish soccer club, playing in blue and white with a Star of David on their chests, often facing anti-Semitic opponents and referees. The club had a humble beginning in pre-WWI Vienna. But within ten seasons the resilient club became the first foreign team to beat an English team on English soil - a sensational 5:0 victory in London over West Ham United. Instantly it had become a glittering symbol of Jewish pride throughout Europe and beyond.

As one who perceived pre-Holocaust European Jewry as an intellectually gifted but physically frail people, the story of Hakoah Vienna's athletic triumphs was a true revelation. Backed by a proud and vibrant Jewish community, Hakoah was the complete antithesis of my former misconception - they confronted hatred sporting the Star of David on their chests and disproved a false stigma with uncompromising physical excellence. The story was waiting to be captured in film, and having been fortunate to discover it, I went to work on production. Soon I traveled to Israel and began full-time research on the history of the club.

Research took me to Vienna, Stockholm, Paris, London, Tel-Aviv, and finally back to New York. I've been exposed to the unique and singular historical phenomena of the Viennese Jews and their intellectually vibrant Coffee-House scene. Beyond its role as an athletic team, this sports club emerged as a proud reflection of a unique culture. Hakoah represented the community's aspirations right up to the tragic demise of Jewish Vienna. My study has led me to interacting with Hakoah's intriguing men and women, triggering a transformation in the project's direction; what was once a narrative dramatizing the exploits of the soccer team's past gave way to a documentary story more urgent to tell.

Early in the initial research, I learned that soon after Vienna's Jewish community met its end in March 1938, Hakoah's president, Dr. Körner (1882-1950), established an international brotherhood — Brith Hakoah 1909 — to maintain the bond between the club members. The organization published periodicals, initiated reunions and documented the club's history in great detail (most notably in "50 years Hakoah", Arthur Baar's 1959 account). Through Brith Hakoah's co-chairperson, I obtained a list of the living Hakoah members, all between ages 80 and 107, and began interviewing them.

It was from these interviews that Watermarks emerged.

Most of my interviewees were the members of the Women's Swimming Section in the 1930s, which inherited Hakoah's flag-bearing status after the soccer team declined in 1927. In the 1930s Austria, swimming was a prominent national sport, with top swimmers achieving a star status. The women I interviewed competed just on the onset of the tragic reign of the Third Reich. Hakoah's fierce competitor at the time was the pro-Nazi club EWASK, a rivalry that transcended sport in its social significance. The participation of Hakoah's swimmers at the 1st and 2nd Maccabiahs ("Jewish Olympics"), held in Palestine in 1932 and 1935, left a lasting impression on the women. They reached a climatic conflict when three Hakoah swimmers resigned from the Austrian swimming team to the 1936's Olympic Games in Nazi Berlin.

KINO

I N T E R N A T I O N A L

WATERMARKS

—Director's Note (continued)—

Springing to life from these accounts were three fascinating historical figures that preceded them in the 1920s: there was the beautiful Hedy Bienenfeld, breaststroke champion and one of Austria's most famous fashion models – worshipped by Vienna's bourgeoisie society for her beauty and flamboyant personality. Next was the eccentric Fritz Löwy - a bohemian, lesbian and tough-minded swimmer who triumphed as the unbeaten champion of the Danube freestyle races for an entire decade. Finally, there was Zsigo Wertheimer - legendary single-minded patriarchal coach of the team, and later Hedy's husband.

But the success and bravery of Hakoah's athletes is only part of the picture. These women, their cheerful and proactive nature left an immense impression on me. Their stories revealed an intriguing world lost to time; tales of childhood in Vienna, lasting bonds with teammates, and their diverse feminine experiences through the years. Also prevalent was the resonant meaning of water, swimming, and sport. These accounts revealed a strong community and confused religious feelings, detailing the great escape from Vienna in 1938, when Hakoah's members left behind parents, families, and dreams. Finally, they unfolded stories of rebuilding lives in new countries and aging with dignity. These women's stories reveal a unique passion and openness – an approach I tried to incorporate into the heart of Watermarks.

Of the thirteen living swimmers, I have chosen eight to primarily follow. They are Greta Wertheimer-Stanton (New Jersey), Anni Lampl (Los Angeles), Nanne Winter-Selinger (New York), Ann Marie Pick-Pisker (London), Hanny Deutsch-Lux (Herzlia, Israel), Judith Deutsch-Haspel (Herzlia), Elisheva Schmidt-Zusz (Ramat Aviv, Israel), and Trude Platzek-Hirschler (Tel Aviv, Israel) – all devoted swimmers and champions.

Each woman grew up in the intellectually vibrant Vienna, and later was forced to flee the city to escape Nazi brutality. They joined Hakoah in a quest for self-identity – an experience that was to mold their personalities and lives. But, their stories are diverse; each has chosen different locations to re-establish their lives, and each have drawn varied conclusions from the tragedy of Jewish Vienna and steered their lives in different professional directions. For example, among them we find a Psychotherapist, a Social Work professor, a travel agent, and several housewives. Like the course of their later lives, their attitude towards Vienna varies dramatically. Some have returned to visit the city they still love, while others have avoided a return to the place and culture they now despise. I believed that the epic of Hakoah should be told through the eyes and experience of these women, using the story of the women swimming section as its focal point.

Watermarks' protagonists are documented as they travel the physical route of Home-Vienna-Home, and the corresponding emotional, psychological and historical journey they undergo. First, we establish their individual characters, as we interview them in the surroundings of their homes, works and social activities. Then they travel to a team reunion in Vienna. There, both as a group and individually, they visit the scenes of their childhood. This process documents their individual and collective response to these memories - creating an experience over sixty years in the making.

Through watching the Hakoah members, I intended to recapture the ethos of Hakoah and Jewish Vienna, but more importantly to document the characters of these champion swimmers with the dignity, beauty, honesty, and boldness they deserve. As we relive the lives of Hakoah's athletes, we also unfold the depths of universal existence every person holds within.

KINO

I N T E R N A T I O N A L

WATERMARKS —CREW BIOS—

Yaron Zilberman – Director/Producer/Writer

A graduate of MIT (1994), with a BS in Physics and a MS in Operations Research and Finance, Yaron brings to filmmaking a diverse background which ranges from science studies and international finance to Internet technology. In the last five years, Mr. Zilberman has dedicated himself to art and filmmaking. After working on a yet unfinished feature-film documentary focusing on the world's greatest soccer stars, Yaron has devoted the last three years of his life to researching, writing, directing and producing Watermarks.

Yonatan Israel – Producer/Associate Writer

Yonatan graduated from the Film Production Department at the New School University in New York City. Before moving to New York in 1998, Yonatan studied in his hometown of Paris, where he obtained a BA in English/American Literature. For the last few years, he has been actively pursuing his lifelong passion for films, developing several documentary projects in association with Paris-based Zadig Productions. In addition, he has been working as a correspondent for the media consulting company I.M.C.A. in Paris. After producing and directing his award-winning short "Taste", Yonatan joined the New York-based Stratosphere Entertainment, working in acquisitions and development.

Ronen Dorfan – Sports Researcher/Associate Writer

Ronen brings a wealth of experience in sport research and writing to this production. He has managed high-profile projects such as the official histories of the Olympic Games and the NBA. Combining unique historical knowledge with a social insight, Ronen's writings have established him as one of Israel's most original sports journalists. Currently, he is the editor of the sports magazine of Haaretz, Israel's quality broadsheet newspapers.

Tom Hurwitz – Director of Photography

Acclaimed cinematographer Tom Hurwitz has been a pillar of numerous award-winning film and television productions. He has won two Emmy awards and a Sundance award for cinematography. He filmed 4 Academy award winners for best full length documentaries.

Among his feature documentary credits are Down and Out In America, The Ten Year Lunch, American Dream, and Harlan County USA. His more recent feature length documentaries include: Dancemaker, on the modern dance choreographer Paul Taylor, Wild Man Blues, on Woody Allen's band tour in Europe, The Turandot Project, about the production of the Puccini opera in Beijing, as staged by Chinese film director Zhang Yimou, and conducted by Zubin Mehta.

Yuval Shar – Editor

Since 1992, Yuval has been actively involved in some of the most high-profile products featured in Israeli television, editing a wide range of programming: from documentaries such as "Sea of Tears" (Yam Shel Dmat) to commercial campaigns for leading companies including Volkswagen, Tuborg Brewery, American Express, Orange Communication.

Yuval has shared his wide editing experiences with students at the "Sam Spiegel Film and Television School", Jerusalem. He has also volunteered to promote different community needs, and won the L.A Promax 2002 "Electronic Media Award" for "Hand", a PSA that was created to raise domestic violence awareness.

KINO

I N T E R N A T I O N A L

WATERMARKS —Production Notes—

Watermarks was produced by Yaron Zilberman (Yofi Films Ltd.) and Yonatan Israel (Jetlag Production). The producers were joined by veteran French documentary producer Paul Rozenberg (Zadig Productions), GCFP (Girls Club Film Project) and by Israeli co-producer Philippa Kowarsky (Cinephil).

Funding

The film was also co-produced by the leading art network ARTE G.E.I.E. (Germany/France), and the ORF (Austria) and was produced in association with HBO/Cinemax (U.S.) and Keshet Broadcast (Israel).

The New Israeli Foundation for cinema and TV and the French Film Center (CNC) have also supported the film. Numerous non-profit foundations contributed to the film: The Righteous Persons Foundation (U.S.), The Foundation of the Memory of the Shoa (France), Rothschild's Yad Hanadiv Foundation (England), along with many individuals. The project is a non-profit project and received a 501(c3) status in the U.S..

Production

From initial idea to completion, it took almost three years to make Watermarks. In depth research was conducted in Europe, especially in Austria and Germany, in Israel, and in the U.S.; the research included the collection of all archive material relevant to the film and interviews with all veteran members of Hakoah Vienna. Ronen Dorfan, an international sports expert joined the team as head researcher and associate writer. Once the rough script was ready, the production team was formed with NY based award winning Director of Photography, Tom Hurwitz, the experienced Israeli sound recordist Tully Chen, the Israeli line producer Liza Gershuni and Viennese production manager Gabriella Reisinger.

The main interviews were conducted and filmed at the swimmers homes in Israel, England, Los Angeles, New Jersey, and Sweden. Then a one week reunion of the seven women swimmers was held in Vienna. They were accompanied by two "Brith Hakoah 1909" presidents (Hans Selinko and Erich Feuer), Hanni's granddaughter Amit, and Trude's husband Jenö. 80 hours of original footage were filmed (Digibeta Sony 790 and super 16 cameras were used).

Post Production

Watermarks' post production phase took about one year. While French editor Ruben Korenfeld commenced the editing, the Israeli editor Yuval Shar was the main person behind the final cut. In addition to his experience in editing documentaries and fiction films, Yuval, as one of the leading advertising editors in Israel, has brought his expertise in fine cutting; the latter was necessary for achieving the look of films from the 1930s and of Viennese opera and operetta productions.

In order to create a balance between the old world of the 1930s in Vienna and the swimmers reunion in the present, relevant swimming footage from Vienna in the 1930s and many Hakoah stills were embedded in the film.



The History of Hakoah Vienna

When Jews first settled in Vienna approximately 1,000 years ago, they experienced varying fortunes with their neighbors. The attitude of the city's rulers constantly shifted between religious persecution to tolerance and appreciation of their economic benefits. While Jews were expelled from Vienna twice, the city was one of the few in Europe not to blame Jews for the Black Death epidemic in 1348-1349. In 1624 the Jews were granted their own quarter in the city — later known as Leopoldstadt — and by the late 18th century, Vienna was not only a major Jewish community and major center of Jewish life, but a center of Hebrew publishing in Central Europe as well. This prompted Jews' gratitude to the Habsburg rulers for their relative security, and contributed to their willingness to financially support the Austrian Army in times of crisis.

In 1848, the fortune of Vienna's Jewish community changed dramatically. In recognition of their participation in the civil war, among the civil rights granted to Viennese Jews was the right to establish an autonomous religious community, with full citizenship following in 1867. Coupled with newfound educational opportunities, the Jewish learning tradition created an intellectual atmosphere in which the Jewish community flourished. Between 1847 and 1900 the Jewish population grew from 6,000 to 147,000, mainly due to mass-emigration from Galicia, Hungary and the rest of Eastern Europe. Traditionally, about 30% of the population concentrated in the Leopoldstadt, with many of the more affluent families moving to the middle-class suburbs. The population grew steadily to 185,000 — 9% of Vienna's total population — on the eve of the Nazi invasion in 1938.

These changes prompted an internal shift in the Jewish community. Religiously, it created tension between orthodox ways of life to a strong movement toward secular enlightenment. The sudden social opportunity also created a strong movement towards assimilation into Austrian Society, which in many instances led pragmatic individuals with ambitions in public life to convert to Christianity. The influx of immigrants also led to tension between the established Jewish population and the immigrants from the East — derogatory dubbed "Ost-Juden".

With their newly found emancipation, Jews were living a dilemma of dual-loyalties. But one aspect of their success was never in doubt: banned from government army posts (bar conversion), they excelled in the liberal professions as physicians, lawyers, journalists, writers and artists — as well as their traditional focal role in trade and banking.

With unprecedented achievements in almost every field of science, arts and humanities, Austrian Jews like Sigmund Freud, Alfred Adler, Martin Buber, Gustav Mahler, Arthur Schnitzler, and Stefan Zweig, were seen as leaders of their respective fields. And three out of four Austrian Nobel Prize winners in medicine were Jewish, as well as half of Austria's physicians and 60% of its lawyers.

Politically, Jewish life was changing too. German Speaking established families dominated Jewish affairs in the mid-19th century, inclining assimilation into Austrian Society. The emergence of Zionist politics, originated in Vienna by Theodore Herzl, gained enthusiastic support among emigrant families who concentrated in the Leopoldstadt and Brigittenau (the "Matzo Island" — named after the "Matzo" Jewish Passover bread). The Zionists gradually assumed control of the Jewish affairs through the Kultusgemeinde — the Jewish union.



The History of Hakoah Vienna —Continued—

Numerous Jewish institutions were established in Vienna, including a Rothschild hospital in 1872 and a Jewish Gymnasium and Pedagogium, founded by Zwi Perez Chajes, the Chief Rabbi of Vienna.

Anti-Semitism

Jewish success was to bring a backlash of anti-Semitism. In 1897, the City elected an anti-Semite mayor, Karl Lueger. Emperor Franz Joseph initially refused to cooperate with Lueger, but following his re-election (ensuring Lueger's mayoral position until 1910), Joseph grudgingly accepted the mayor's power. Lueger blamed the Jews for Vienna's financial problems and incited anti-Semitic feelings, while privately keeping social relations with some wealthy Jewish friends. Adolph Hitler, at the time a young man in the city, later claimed to be influenced by Lueger.

The collapse of the Hapsburg Empire following WWI denied the Jews a powerful ally. With the center of Jewish intellectualism shifting from Europe to North America, the decline of the community was on the horizon, though its tragic ending was still unimaginable.

In March 1938 Austria was annexed by Nazi Germany (the Anschluss). State-supported violence against Jews erupted – culminating in the Crystal Night (November 9, 10 1938). Jewish shops, institutions, and synagogues were mobbed and ravaged, resulting in 6,000 people being sent to the Dachau concentration camp. The racist Nurnberg laws were enforced, denying Jews their civil liberties and forcing them to wear a yellow badge. The Social Democratic Party, political home of most Jews, was crushed, with many of its members and leaders deported to concentration camps. All Jewish organizations and institutions – including Hakoah - were shut down, and the Nazis encouraged emigration. While nearly 130,000 Jews left Austria, the majority of the rest perished in the Holocaust. 2,000 survived the camps and about 800 survived in hiding.

KINO

I N T E R N A T I O N A L

The History of Hakoah Vienna

Introduction

Despite its relatively brief three decade existence, the Hakoah Vienna Sports Club embodies the full complexity of Jewish experience in Austrian culture. Established in one of history's most dramatic, and tragic eras, Hakoah represented the revival of the Jewish body as a vehicle for community and national identity. The 19th Century offered European sentiments of "Masculine Christianity" and institutionalized sport, epitomized in the Olympics of the 1890s. Hakoah's later creation brought similar notions to the Jewish world. During its short life-span, the club practiced the optimistic ideals of coexistence of dual-national loyalty within the Habsburg Empire, switched to disillusion from Austrian society and fully committed Zionism, and eventually emerged as a vehicle of physical rescue in the midst of Nazi brutality.

Early years

The late 1890s saw the idea of the Jewish community's physical revival in the first Zionist congresses. Max Nordau's famous address at the first Zionist congress challenged Jewish youth to adopt athletic activity to bolster and strengthen their national identity. Hakoah's conception can be traced and attributed to three individuals. Foremost was Dr. Körner, a dentist, one of Vienna's most important Jewish leaders, and the club's second president and unique sport visionary. Next came Dr. Fritz "Beda" Löhner, famous lyrist of Franz Lehár's operettas and a pillar of the Viennese musical world. Löhner's contributions were instrumental to the club's fundraising, and his political influence crucially assisted the club. Finally was David Weinberg, the original visionary for a Jewish sports club, and the man who convinced Dr. Körner and his entire family to create and participate in Hakoah. Weinberg lost his life as an Austrian patriotic officer in the first World War.

The formative years of the club were characterized by internal strife within the Jewish community; the affluent majority strongly resented the idea of Hakoah, frightened by its potential to undermine Jewish integration into Austrian society, and even fuel anti-Semitism. As football was the club's primary sport, negative sentiments were reinforced by the team's poor results. A combination of financial support from rich beneficiaries and the rising influence of Dr. Körner – and his innovative hands-on approach to running the club – resulted in a promotion from the Austrian fourth division to second division on the eve of the Great War. The new departments opened provided recreation opportunities for many Viennese Jews, those of East-European origin providing Hakoah with a wealth of support. To combat other clubs' embrace of the "Aryan Paragraph" – which denied Jews admission – middle-class Jews preferred affiliation with other tolerant Viennese clubs.

Despite Hakoah's social and financial difficulties, its status was growing in all sections of the Jewish community. Though self-proclaimed Zionist, early Hakoah considered itself a patriotic Austrian club. Many Hakoah members volunteered for WWI, resulting in numerous casualties. Striving to preserve the close bond with its members stationed at the WWI front, athletes received a regular newsletter and parcel from club members back in Vienna. Sport activity was maintained at a possible level, as Austrian Sport came to a near standstill.

Post-War Soccer Fame (1919-1927)

Following the Great War, Dr. Körner, a decorated officer for his war-time heroics, embarked on an ambitious plan: Körner sought to transform Hakoah into one of Europe's leading soccer clubs. He convinced club members to commit most of the club's resources to building a modern soccer ground. Later, with Austrian football turning professional, Körner recruited the best Jewish players from Austria and Hungary to Hakoah's ranks.

KINO

I N T E R N A T I O N A L

The History of Hakoah Vienna

—continued—

While the club maintained an all-Jewish policy on the field, Körner hired top British coaches to elevate Hakoah's play to world-class standards. The year of 1921 saw Hakoah's promotion to Austria's top division, marking the onset of the club's golden era.

In 1923, West Ham United toured Austria. Because of their policy not to compete against "enemy" clubs, West Ham United included the Jewish Clubs among their few opponents. In turn, Hakoah was capable of matching the English in strength and endurance – heavily attributed to consistently harsh treatment from Anti-Semitic teams and referees. The match ended in a 1:1 draw and the English club invited Hakoah to a return match in London later in the year. That ensuing match showcased one of Hakoah's most triumphant moments. Led by Bella Guttmann and Alexander Neufeld, Hakoah won 5:0, becoming the first foreign club to defeat an English team on English soil. The effort earned rave reviews from the English press, who described their fluid style and game plan as "artistic and scientific". The Austrian press and public opinion were quick to adopt the Hakoah team as national heroes, and the members were greeted by a special envoy from the chancellor upon their homecoming.

Within two years, Hakoah captured the Austrian championship in typical dramatic fashion. Goalkeeper Shandor Fabian, forced by injury into a midfield role, scored the championship-winning goal. Hakoah's later tours and victories – to Palestine, Egypt, the United States, and throughout Europe – brought immense pride to Jewish communities worldwide. The 1926 and 1927 U.S tours weakened the soccer team considerably. The lure of American money and growing anti-Semitism in Vienna brought most senior players to accept lucrative offers from rich American teams. Realizing that Hakoah's golden era was coming to a close, Dr. Körner resigned and moved to a role of honorary president. Körner's successors opted to shift the club's focus to other fields.

The Swimming Section

As the football team began to scatter, Hakoah's emphasis shifted towards other sports – primarily the swimming section that eventually dominated Austrian water sports from 1922 until the Anschluss. While Hakoah excelled in most sports, the highlights were the achievements of its female swimmers in the late 20s and 30s. This success was rooted in two main factors: Hakoah's liberal approach to female sport and the presence of their exemplary coach, Zsigo Wertheimer. Excluding soccer, swimming was Austria's most popular sport, with top swimmers often elevated to superstar status. Established in 1910, Hakoah's swim team had met with only modest success. The club participated in the first "Quer durch Wien" in 1913, but only one Hakoah swimmer managed to complete the grueling 7 Kilometer course.

In 1922, Dr. Valentin Rosenfeld took over as head of the swimming section, prompting the start of the ascension. By 1924, Hakoah recorded a sensational double victory in the Quer Durch Wien – Alfred Guth among the men and 15-year-old Hedy Bienenfeld among the women – beginning Hakoah's enduring winning streak in Austria's most popular sport event. The following year Guth repeated as champion while Hedy finished second to teammate Fritzzy Löwy. Fritzzy, a freestyler, and Hedy, a breaststroker, had commenced a career which promised them over twenty Austrian Championships each. During this era, Hakoah's great adversary emerged – the pro-Nazi EWASK club with its satellite regional branches. Throughout the next decade, EWASK continuously attempted to block Hakoah success, usually by procedural means and questioning Hakoah's national affiliation and loyalty. More positively, Hakoah successfully organized annual international meet, attracting world famous swimmers (including the legendary Johnny Weismuller, who broke a world record during the Hakoah event).

KINO

I N T E R N A T I O N A L

The History of Hakoah Vienna —continued—

As the women's team continued mounting victories in pools and rivers, a new generation of champions entered the spotlight, including Idy Cohn, who consistently challenged Löwy for freestyle titles. In 1930, coach Wertheimer married Hedy Bienenfeld in a festive club ball. Throughout the early 30s, Hedy and Fritzzy stretched their victories to international meets throughout central Europe, earning rankings that rivaled Europe's top swimmers. Despite the quality of these efforts, EWASK's increasing followers mounted rising contempt for the Jewish athletes. To combat this disturbing trend, Hakoah moved its important championships out of Vienna to provincial towns. By the mid 30s, these prejudiced obstacles turned more physical; many competitions deteriorated into violent anti-Semitic demonstrations.

In the face of adversity, Hakoah remained stellar in the pool, with the female swimming section's best days still to come. In 1932, the team completed an important sporting and emotional voyage, when it competed at the 1st Maccabiah Games in Palestine's Haifa harbor. Later that year, Hedy broke her own Austrian record for the 100-meter breaststroke to 1:27.6 – a time that placed her in the world's elite. By 1933, Fritzzy Löwy had topped the Austrian 100-meter freestyle championships for an amazing tenth straight year.

1934 ushered in a new star to inherit Hedy and Fritzzy's dominance: Judith Deutsch. By the fall of 1935, Deutsch held every Austrian middle and long distance freestyle record, her achievements emphasizing Hakoah's iron will to maintain sporting excellence in times of adversity for the Jewish community. Earlier, in March of 1935, Hakoah competed in the 2nd Maccabiah under the Maccabi-Austria name. With Judith Deutsch ill and her participation reduced to the victorious 4x100-meter freestyle relay team, Hakoah's veterans carried the load to achieve success. Hedy defended her 200-meter breaststroke championship and Fritzzy won the 400-meter freestyle.

In early 1936, Judith became the first Hakoah member to win the Golden Badge of honor, a prestige annually bestowed on Austria's top three athletes. Unfortunately, her status as national sporting hero was short-lived; within a year, she was permanently banned from competition and saw all her records erased from official books. These slights resulted directly from her courageous decision to refuse competing in the Nazi Berlin-held Olympic Games. Deutsch was not alone in her justified defiance: teammates Ruth Langer and Lucie Goldner joined her in the boycott.

War and survival

On March 15, 1938, Nazi Germany invaded Austria without resistance. The Nuremberg laws were implemented and the authorities promptly shut Hakoah down. Channeling his immense courage reserves, Dr. Körner, Dr. Rosenfeld and Zsigo Wertheimer began a highly successful rescue operation, supported by club functionaries already established in London. Most Hakoah members managed to escape Vienna and the Nazi horror, and later renewed their team bonds by comprising the international brotherhood "Brit Hakoah 1909". Spreading the Hakoah tradition, they formed Hakoah clubs in their new homes – including New York, San Francisco, Tel Aviv, Sydney and London. This resistance and dedication could not save everyone; 39 Hakoah members, including founder Beda Löhner, perished in the concentration camps.

KINO

I N T E R N A T I O N A L

WATERMARKS —Protagonists Bios—

— Elisheva Susz (Schmidt) – Born 1919, Vienna; lives in Ramat Aviv, Israel.

Growing up in an assimilated family in a predominantly non-Jewish district, Elisheva was discovered and recruited by Zsigo Wertheimer, Hakoah's elite trainer, during a family vacation in Pörschach, a popular middle-class resort in Southern Austria.

On top of a successful backstroke career, she was confronted for the first time in Hakoah to a form of Judaism that challenged her identity profoundly. She enjoyed active involvement with the club's social and educational work. She fell in love with Palestine while participating in the 2nd Maccabiah ("The Jewish Olympics") in 1935.

Upon her return to Vienna from the 2nd Maccabiah, her parents mocked her project of immigration. Ironically, they were saved by her when she arranged a place for them on a Hakoah's illegal transport to Palestine in 1938. Elisheva escape through England and finally reached Palestine. During her last years in Vienna, Elisheva started working as a children educator in Hakoah, while studying psychology with the founders of psychology (such as Anna Freud). Upon her arrival to Palestine, she established a flourishing kindergarten. She became a renowned child psychotherapist in Israel and Europe, and still runs an active practice. She has two children and six grandchildren.

— Ann Marie Pisker (Pick) – Born 1919, Vienna; lives in London, England.

Brought up in a wealthy family, Ann-Marie lost her mother at a young age and spent much of her youth in boarding schools in London and Paris. Ann Marie frequently returned to Vienna where she developed a passion for swimming in Hakoah, despite the objections of her father, an importer of American cars.

She became a regular participant in the summer training camp organized by Zsigo Wertheimer in Pörschach; she remembers these days as a period of fun, sensual awakening and dancing to the beats of 30's American Jazz. She also participated in the 1935 Maccabiah and won several championships including the "All Across Vienna" Danube race in 1937.

She escaped to England from the Nazis, taking refuge with previous connections formed in her boarding school days. There, she married a fellow Hakoah member. Athletics gifts run in the family, as Ann Marie's son was also to participate in the Maccabiah, representing the UK in tennis.

— Hanni Lux (Deutsch) - Born 1921, Vienna; lives in Herzelia Pituach, Israel.

The sister of Hakoah's most internationally famous swimmer Judith Deutsch, Hanni grew up in a well-to-do and highly educated family in the outskirts of Vienna. Her mother was one of the first women to complete her studies at Vienna University, and went on to become a lecturer of art history and languages. Their father, a patent engineer and heavy machinery trader, was a devoted Zionist (and a Hakoah functionary) who refused to enter Germany following Hitler's rise to power in 1933. The two sisters devoted most of their youth to swimming.

KINO

I N T E R N A T I O N A L

Protagonists Bios —continued—

— **Hanni Lux (Deutsch) - Born 1921, Vienna; lives in Herzelia Pituach, Israel.**
(continued)

During WWII, Hanni joined the British Army's WAAF (the Women's Auxiliary Air Force), where she met her first husband, Jimmy, an officer in the Air Force. After the war, they moved to England and few years later established themselves in Israel. About a decade after Jimmy passed away (by a car accident), she married her tenant Otto Lux and at 46 gave birth to her 4th child. Hanni has 6 grandchildren. Aside from her busy family life, Hanni is deeply involved in a Shakespeare reading group and gymnastic activities. She's been living next door to her sister Judith since the 40's and they still meet daily for a glass of Vermouth and poetry reading.

A backstroker, Hanni watched as Judith was voted Austria's best athlete of the year in 1936. That same year, after her refusal to participate in the Nazi Berlin Olympic Games, Judith was banned from competitions for life.

— **Judith Haspel (Deutsch) – Born 1918, Vienna; lives in Herzelia Pituach, Israel.**

Hanni's older sister and arguably the defining champion of Hakoah's glorious history. A freestyle star, Judith held every Austrian middle and long distance freestyle record by 1935 (she broke 12 national records that year), her achievements emphasizing Hakoah's iron will to maintain sporting excellence in times of adversity for the Jewish community. In early 1936, Judith became the first Hakoah member to win the Golden Badge of honor, a prestige annually bestowed on Austria's top three athletes. Unfortunately, her status as national sporting hero was short-lived; within a year, she was permanently banned from competition and saw all her records erased from official books. These slights resulted directly from her courageous decision to refuse competing in the Nazi Berlin-held Olympic Games. Judith left Vienna on the eve of the Anschluss to Haifa (at the time the only city with a swimming-pool in Palestine). She joined the local club and became Palestine's champion. The family then settled in Herzelia Pituach. Judith married Dr. Pilly Haspel who was the goal keeper of the Austrian Hockey team. They raised three children.

In 1995, the president of the Austrian swimming federation was made aware of the injustice that had been committed against Judith almost 60 years earlier. He invited her to Vienna for a ceremony during which Judith would be returned her records and medals. Stating that it had taken them too long to recognize their wrongdoing, Judith refused to travel to Vienna. So, the Austrian officials flew to Israel where Judith was reinstated as the great champion she once was.

— **Greta Stanton (Wertheimer) - Born in Vienna 1919; lives in New Jersey, USA.**

Joining Hakoah along with her high school best friends, Greta became a diver for the club, an experience that shaped both her Jewish and feminine identities. She became Austria's youth champion. Greta could not escape Vienna right after the Anschluss, she supported her family until August '39 by teaching English. She managed to emigrate to America and she saved her parents lives by arranging a visa for them to Cuba.

KINO

I N T E R N A T I O N A L

Protagonists Bios —continued—

— Greta Stanton (Wertheimer) - Born in Vienna 1919; lives in New Jersey, USA. (Continued)

Greta first marriage was childless. Later in life, knowing that having children of her own might be impossible, Greta married a widower with two children. Step parenting has since become her field of expertise in the academic world. A professor emeritus of social work, she still organizes psychodrama sessions for high-school students in New Jersey on the topic of mixed marriages. Greta also sings in a choir of senior citizens and is involved with the Yad Vashem museum in Jerusalem

— Anni Lampl – Born 1917, Vienna; Lives in Los Angeles, USA.

A breaststroke champion for Hakoah, Annie met her future husband Sep (himself a fencer for the club) while training in the outdoors facility of Stadionbad, Hakoah's training base during the hot Viennese season.

During the Anschluss, Anni's father was betrayed by his business partner, who refused to lend them money in order to leave Austria. The family finally managed to get on a ship to America. She and Sep had a son, John, and the family reestablished in Los Angeles. While in her 40's, Anni lost her sight to uveitis. She went back to school and became a psychotherapist. She still runs a group for the visually impaired and another one entitled "Getting Old is not for Sissies". She's also regained her Austrian citizenship in order to vote "so that nothing like Hitler would happen again".

— Nanne Selinger – Born 1921, Vienna; lives in New York, USA.

Despite being among the younger swimmer in the team, Nanne nevertheless developed very deep emotional ties with fellow Hakoah members. She managed to escape to America after her pen pal's family arranged a visa for her family. In the 1970s, she returned to live in Vienna with her husband who inherited real estate there. Although Nanne admits being extremely fond of Vienna and its lifestyle, she returned to America after the election of Kurt Waldheim as Austria's president. A great fan of classical concerts, she now shares her life between New York and Florida. After her first husband passed away, she met and married the owner of the famous "Café Éclair", the rendezvous of all the Viennese expatriates in NYC.

— Trude Hirschler (Platzek) – Born in 1921, Vienna; lives in Tel Aviv, Israel.

Trude joined Hakoah in 1934 as a breaststroke swimmer. Following the Anschluss, she and her sister immigrated to Palestine on an illegally ship. In 1942, she was approached by Hakoah's legendary club president and founder, Dr. Ignaz Hermann Körner, who asked her to become the secretary of "Brith Hakoah 1909" (Hakoah veteran's organization), because she could type in English, French and German. Trude helped establish the international network of Hakoah veterans, keeping the club's spirit alive. Almost 60 years later, she is Brith Hakoah co-chairperson, arranging reunions and contacts of her lifelong teammates. Trude lives with her 90-year-old husband Jenö, a former Hungarian water polo champion. They swim every morning and just recently stopped working at their travel agency.



Historical Sub-plot Characters

— Hedy Bienenfeld-Wertheimer (1906-1976)

As a nearly undefeated champion breaststroker in a career spanning the 1920s and 30's, Hedy Bienenfeld-Wertheimer was one of the earliest female Superstars in modern Sport. A popular fashion model, Hedy's physical beauty is still reflected vividly in albums and magazines of the time. Her flamboyant personality drew fans to the sport, young Jewish girls to swimming, and many admirers and lovers to her personal life. As a testament to her immense charisma, Hedy was immortalized as Lisa in the 1930 classic novel "The Pupil Gerber," which was later filmed in 1980.

"The Pupil Gerber" was the first novel by Friedrich Torberg, who was arguably Austria's greatest post-War author, a member of Hakoah Water Polo team, and Hedy's lover and life long admirer. Described by her teammates with enormous affection and admiration, Hedy took on a mythic role model status to her Hakoah compatriots.

— Fritz Löwy (1910-1994)

In sharp contrast to the beautiful, bourgeoisie, feminine Jewish role model Hedy, Fritz Löwy stands proud as a free-style champion. Round bodied, probably half-Jewish, a bohemian and lesbian, this eccentric individual (known to keep a pet monkey) was Austria's greatest freestyler. Fritz's skills were so formidable that she remained unbeaten in the famous Danube swimming marathons, "Quer durch Wien", for an entire decade. Alongside Hedy, she defined the cornerstone of Hakoah freestyler winning tradition. Together they also pioneered Synchronized Swimming in Austria. While Hedy disapproved of her teammates' lifestyle, she grew closer to Fritz late in life, often inviting her for dinners and probably helping to support her financially.

— Zsigo Wertheimer (1897-1965)

Zsigo was the renowned trainer behind the success of Hakoah women swimming team. A classic tough disciplinarian, he never compromised standards and was famous, or infamous, for throwing his slippers into the pool in front of swimmers not meeting his high demands. Wertheimer was idolized by all young swimmers of the club striving to be accepted to his elite group of athletes. In 1930, in a great club ball, Zsigo married his prodigy champion Hedy Bienenfeld, who was 10 years his junior. Together they fled Vienna for London in the wake of war, eventually settling in the United States. They spent some years in New York running a successful swimming program, and later moved to Florida where they accumulated significant wealth in real estate. Following Zsigo's death, Hedy returned to Vienna, continuing to amass male admirers into her later years.