

TITELINFORMATION

... a moving story indeed - like so many of this century.

– Volker Schlöndorff, film director

Family Matters follows the traces of a German family who, over the course of four generations, is repeatedly drawn across the Atlantic in both directions. Like Elizabeth and Little Henry, who have to leave their beloved New York behind to return to their old homeland in the early 20th century; the violinist Clara, who can only live out her vocation in the America of the suffragettes; the „War Bride“ Toni, who courageously follows a G.I. to Nebraska after World War II; and finally the student Iris, who tries to find her place in both worlds in the 1980s. In retrospect, they all ask themselves the same the question, „What if?“, which is the thread connecting the narrative.

What if they hadn't gone to America or back to the old country, hadn't fallen in love or taken a bolder, different path?

Family Matters detaches simple yet memorable characters from the yellowed pictures in photo albums, gives them a voice, and places them in their own time. Martina J. Kohl brings the past to life. She shows that the present cannot be understood without the past. And that migration, uprooting and the search for identity are universal topics.

Martina Kohl, in her novel Family Matters, has woven generations of her German family into a web of memoir and fiction in an imaginative and original way. Based on photographs, letters, story - the characters and their colorful personalities become very real to us. In the process of storytelling, Martina Kohl provides a glimpse not only into her family's past, but the conflicts faced by many Europeans trying to forge new lives in America. This book is a pleasure to read as it does not include one extra word! It is concise, thoughtful and marvelous.

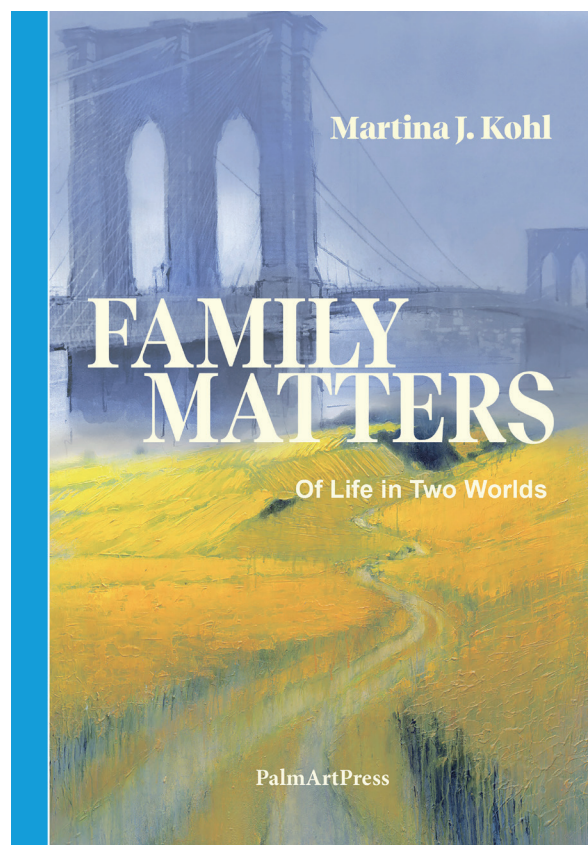
– Mindy Weisel, artist and author of *Daughters of Absence* and *After: The Obligation of Beauty*

Will it surprise you if I say that I'm particularly fond of the very serious, very competent graduate student who decides that her future is in her own country?

– Louis Begley, author of *Wartime Lies* and the *Schmidt*-trilogy



Martina J. Kohl has worked in the Cultural Section of the U.S. Embassy in Berlin, Germany, for many years. She has developed and organized numerous programs, but especially loved the literature series. Writing has been her passion ever since she taught at the University of Michigan. It is part of her seminars that she teaches regularly at Humboldt University Berlin and has defined her work as editor of the *American Studies Journal*. As an advisory board member of the Salzburg Global American Studies Program, she continues to engage in transatlantic dialogue. Among her academic publications, *Family Matters* is her first book-length fictional work.



novel

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