

The Frank family

Hans Adalbert Frank was born in Nuremberg on 5th May 1881 to Emil Frank and Jenny Stern. Hans' father died in 1892 and on his death his mother returned with her 3 children Elisabeth, Hans and Otto to her parents' home in Mannheim.

On leaving school, Hans was apprenticed as a banker at a highly regarded Mannheim Bank. In 1899 he joined a Hamburg import company and was promoted after nine months to management in Berlin and increased the annual turnover to over four million marks. In 1910 Hans set up his own company in the fur trade and later established the Fur Trading Association of which he was Chairman for many years. With his worldwide contacts, he hoped he could secure safe emigration for his family as life became untenable in Germany.

Hans was also skilled in mechanics and technology and patented a few inventions which he intended to manufacture.

His first wife, Martha Schade, tragically died within a year and Lotte met Hans during his time of mourning. Although Lotte had many suitors, she was interested only in Hans and the two became engaged on April 12th 1921 and married soon after on June 30th 1921.

Charlotte (Lotte) Frank was the daughter of Wilhelm and Sophie Wallerstein and was born in Leipzig on 29th January 1901. Her father was a furrier.

After graduating from high school and business school, she worked in her father's company and married Hans Frank in 1921. With a passionate interest in children's welfare, she secured employment in 1921 at a Children's Hospital with Doctor Neumann and then between 1922-24 in the kindergarten department of a home for youths. She took special care of a child named Ilse after whom she named her own daughter. Her own three children were born later: Hellmut in 1927, Ilse in 1929, and Tommi in 1933 and they all enjoyed a secular Jewish life at Paderborner Str 2 Wilmersdorf, Berlin.

From 1933 increased exclusions, insults and attacks on Jewish people was also noticeable in schools, although the official exclusion on public schooling came later. As a result of the "Law on the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service", Jewish teachers were also forbidden to teach in public schools and their pension entitlements were lost. Many tried to make a living with private lessons. Dr. Leonore Goldschmidt established a Jewish private school at Hohenzollerndamm 110a for many affected teachers and children with an emphasis on intensive English lessons in preparedness for emigration to Israel. Ilse also attended this school. As Hellmut suffered from a stiff knee due to an early illness of bone tuberculosis he did not go to school but was home schooled by a governess.

As acts of violence against Jews intensified, the family tried desperately to obtain visas for the family but because of Hellmut's medical record the applications were repeatedly rejected. As life became more hopeless, Ilse secured a place on „SS Europa“ for a Kindertransport to England and the „SS Orama“ to Australia. Although it was hoped that Ilse would be cared for by her mother's sister who had emigrated earlier, the Australian Jewish

Welfare program sponsored Ilse and she subsequently lived under their care in a house in Melbourne called 'Larino'. Thomas should have followed her shortly thereafter. In the meantime, Charlotte had obtained sponsorship from a lady in Melbourne but war was then declared and she was unable to leave Germany.

After Ilse emigrated, Charlotte's mother, Sophie Wallerstein moved in with her daughter's family as her apartment on Johann-Georg-Strasse had been assigned as a "Judenhaus".

On August 15, 1942, after detailing their belongings in the designated property file, the Frank family were forced to assemble at the synagogue at Levetzowstrasse which had been converted into

a transit camp and from this point directly to a railway wagon. They were deported to Riga in the most terrible conditions and shot in the Rumbula forest on 18th August 1942. Sophie Wallerstein was deported three weeks later to Theresienstadt where she suffered from gastrointestinal consequences of the conditions and died on 1st March 1943. It is all “unbelievable”, screams Ilse to this day.

Text: Karen Saunders