

What propagated our trip?

I am a holocaust survivor. Born in Leipzig, Germany in 1937, the war was already on Germany's doorstep. My father, Walter Leopold and my mother's brother, Carlo Bluemlein, went to concentration camp in 1939 but were released several months later because they processed what Germany calls their Congressional Medal of Honor from World War I. That same year, my mother's sister, Bertha Freifeld, put her three children on the last Kindertransport to London. She knew that deportation for all of us was inevitable. My father's brothers and his mother migrated to the US and Cuba in 1938, my mother's oldest brother, Max Bluemlein, left for Capetown, South Africa and another brother, Carlo Bluemlein, migrated to Merano, Italy. One of my uncles wives in the US secured us a visa but forgot to pay for it and we lost our last chance to migrate. In 1942 my aunt (mother of the three boys) and my grandmother were deported to Theresienstadt; my parents and I were on the same deportation list (see enclosed). We went underground. 12 wonderful non-Jews hid us from the Nazi slaughter (see signatures & testimonials). Securing blank passes and forging stamps, my father was able to create travel passes for us. When bombed out at our last refuge place, we came into the open with fictitious names and histories and were able to secure papers under the "bombed-out" act. We migrated to Bludenz, Austria in Sept. 1944. There we revealed our true identity in 1946 and due to anti-Semitism and refusal on our part to convert to Catholicism, my father was destined to lose his wonderful position. This propagated our migration to the United States in 1950.

My mother was the youngest of her siblings – I am the youngest cousin on my mother's side. Since our migration to the US, my ambition has been to locate any living relatives on my mother's side. I knew of the three cousins who went to London on the Kindertransport but did not know of their whereabouts. My mother thought they all went to Israel but our search in the big cities was fruitless.

Then, one day in February 1994 the phone rang at work. It was Harriet Geller from the Jewish Family Service. A young investigator, Mr. Mario Martin from Leipzig, Germany, was searching for missing heirs to an inheritance of a distant relative. After my OK to Harriet Geller, this young man phoned me and informed me that he had found my three missing cousins: one - Alfred Field in Sydney, Australia, two – Ralph Erich Freifeld in Antwerp, Belgium and three- Morris Freifeld in London, England. You can imagine my joy. That same night I phoned all three of them. The next day I received another phone call from Mr. Martin. He had located another cousin – a son from my mother's oldest sister Franziska, who lived in Lyon, France and then was deported to concentration camp. My mother found this impossible since she thought her nephew was killed with his mother. Her sister Franziska had also a younger son – the older one escaped and the young son died with

his mother. You can imagine the joy of my mother and I and especially the joy of Eliezer Levzion in Jerusalem when we phoned him. He then was 69 years old and thought he had no other living relatives. The following day I received a third call from Mario. He located another cousin in Germany – the son of my Uncle Carlo in Italy. We also phoned and became very close. Sadly, Rolf died in 1999. The following day a phone call from Mario revealed that there existed a niece from my Uncle Max's wife in South Africa – Ruth Mendel. We became instant friends. So, all of a sudden I had this large family (and also a very large phone bill). Because I am the only one that speaks German and the others speak only English, I now became the liaison between the investigator and my cousins. I also became the only one that stayed in contact with all of them – letter writing is not their greatest asset. I vowed that one day I would meet them all. The cousin from Australia came to see us in 1994 so he could meet my mother.

This young investigator now was really interested in our story. He found many documents pertaining to my mother's family. He asked me for any kind of war documentation and I sent him a copy of a letter. A courageous head of the household who hid us organized this letter (enclosed). It is a statement of the integrity of my father with all the signatures and the addresses of the parties that hid us. Mario Martin was able to locate the daughter of the last savior and also one of the daughters who along with her father and young son gave us asylum for two-five week periods. These reunions were a burning desire I eventually needed to fulfill. Although I vowed never to return to the "hell-hole" in Germany from which I escaped, I decided that after 56 years this trip was inevitable.

The second reason for our trip was to introduce Matt's American cousin Esther and her husband Fred Schwartz to their large Greek family. Both of us also met with Matt's cousin- Victoria – in Holon, Israel for the very first time.

That is what propagated this trip the summer of 2000.

By Anneliese Leopold Yosafat August 18, 2000

First – a glossary and explanation of some of the names in our story:

Harriet Geller – case worker at Jewish Family Service in Cincinnati

Bertha Freifeld: - My mother's (Hilda Leopold's) sister – put her three children on the Kindertransport in 1939 and was killed in concentration camp in 1942

Afred Freifeld Field: - oldest child of Bertha Freifeld – now in Sydney, Australia

Ralph Erich Freifeld: - middle child of Bertha Freifeld – now in Antwerp, Belgium

Morris Freifeld: - youngest son of Bertha Freifeld – now in London, England

Max Bluemlein, Carlo Bluemlein: - brothers of my mother - deceased

Franzeska Lewinsohn: - oldest sister of my mother, killed in concentration camp with her younger son

Eliezer Lewinsohn Levzion: - older son of Franzeska – escaped to Jerusalem

Rolf Grund: - son of my mother's brother Carlo – died in Germany 1999

Ruth Mendel: - niece of Max Bluemlein in Capetown, South Africa

Ergun and Eshegul: - dear friends of Matt in Turkey

Esther and Fred Schwartz : - Matt's American cousins from Portland, Oregon

Christa: - a daughter of the last family that hid us in Leipzig, Germany - the house which was bombed

Josephine - a daughter of a father and daughter team who hid us twice for 5 weeks each between 1942 and 1944.

Mario Martin - the investigator who found all my cousins seven years ago, also found Josephine and made all these re-unions possible.

Rita Martin – Mario's wife

Elfie Lacina - a needy child from Vienna who stayed with us in Bludenz, Austria from 1946 - 1949 during the summer- whose father wanted us to adopt her. We lost touch with each other after 1954 when she moved to Canada once she was of age. Elfie is now 65 years of age.

GREECE

Next we flew to Athens, Greece, where we met Matt's cousin Esther and husband Fred from Portland, Oregon. We decided a long time ago to meet in Greece to be together and to meet relatives whom they had never met. Esther's mother and Matt's father were brother and sister. Esther and Fred's purpose of their Rumania and Turkey visit was to trace Fred's father's roots in Rumania and Esther's father's roots in Turkey. They were extremely successful and we enjoyed their findings and their euphoria of success. Their mission of their trip with us to Greece was twofold, to be together in this beautiful country and to meet the family. Esther and Fred, Matt and I met some cousins in Athens, and had dinner with them at a beautiful outdoor restaurant with a view of the Acropolis. In Salonika, we introduced them to more cousins. Right in front of our hotel was a large town square. It is there that the high priests of Greece held a meeting to demonstrate against removing designation of religion from their ID cards. The streets and the square were filled with an ocean of people from as far as one could see. We watched this from our veranda and the crowd was unbelievable. During our days in Salonika, we visited the cemetery of Matt's beloved departed relatives. There is a mass grave and monument for the bones of a previous cemetery that was uprooted by the Nazis. The Greeks build a fair at the site of the old cemetery, took monuments and piled them up across the street. This large monument in the "now Jewish cemetery" houses these remains under this beautiful monument. The broken and remaining whole monuments are placed all around the cemetery. In the evening, several relatives came to bid us farewell. The next day we went on to Katerini, Matt's birthplace, to introduce another cousin and his family. They are the only Jewish family living there. Eventually we went back to Athens to fly to Mycanos. We spent several lovely days there and then took the ferryboat to Santorini. It was a wonderful few days on the islands. Then together we flew back to Athens - Esther and Fred went back to the States and we continued our trip.

water still in disbelief that so many beautiful places exist in this world. We took a wonderful ferry ⁴ ride on the Bosphoros - we were able to see the beautiful countryside. Istanbul is separated by the Bosphoros; one side - the old part - is European and the other is the Asiatic side. After we de-boarded the ferry we went to an out-door café. It seems that all we did was eat and did other things on the side. The weather was beautiful - somewhat cool at night.