

## Project Kaved, Interview # 4

Subject: Alfred Freimark

Born: May 13<sup>th</sup>, 1910, Stadtlengsfeld, Germany

Interviewer: Jerry Freimark (F)

F.: [This is the 15<sup>th</sup> of November 1997. We are in the beautiful home of [my cousins] Fred and Amalie Freimark in Mahwah, New Jersey. I am interviewing my cousin Fred. I want Fred to tell us about his early days in Germany and really talk about the things up to his coming to America.

Please, Fred, tell us about yourself.

Well, I was born May the 13th, 1910. I lived in my hometown, the population about four to five thousand. I went to public school. (F.:) Stadtlengsfeld, in *Thüringen*, *später war's die DDR, also Ost-Germany*, East-Germany. - - I went there to school. *Bürgerschule* (public school), whatever you say. - - I was the only Jewish boy in my class. All the others were Protestant. But I never had any difficulties that somebody would tell me about religion. That was no difference in religion.

F.: Did you have a synagogue?

We had a synagogue. But there were only a few Jewish children. And we had only had, I think, one hour Hebrew school in a week.

We had a very big synagogue, because formerly, not to my time, was a very big Jewish congregation. But at my time, when I left Germany, in 1938, there were only about ten families left. But we went to synagogue every *Shabbes* and every holiday. In 1938 I left Germany. But before, like I mentioned before, I went to school and spent all *meine Jugendjahre in Stadtlengsfeld*. (all the years of my youth). I was 28 years old when I left. But I never [experienced] personally that anybody called me a Jew, or even like in other places, they put *Hakenkreuze* (swastikas) on the Jewish *Häuser* (houses). That never happened in my hometown, because there were only a handful Nazis.

If I mix that up a little here a little there *das spielt keine Rolle?* (That doesn't matter?)

Like I mentioned before, Stadtlengsfeld, about ten families, but on holidays... There was for instance a smaller place, a village, about 500 population, (F.) Gehaus, *und auch* (and also) *Nachtiefenort und* in Tondorf, nearby, where a few Jewish families who came on holidays, like *Rosheshonoh und so on nach Stadtlengsfeld zur Synagoge*. We had a tremendous Synagogue. There was seats enough for a few hundred people. - - Wait a minute.

In 1938, when Hitler came into power, there were for every Jewish store SA, to boycott *Geschäfte*, (businesses) but all those SA were not from my hometown, because from my hometown nobody would stand in front of a Jewish store. Because they were not Nazis. Later on they were Nazis in uniform [only]. But under the uniform.... For instance, I want to mention, we had friends. They were forced to go in SA or SS. They waited till nighttime and they visited us and they took the uniform [off] and they hang it up on a (laughs) ? -? And they told us: "You see, *Hier hängt der Nazi an der Wand, und der SPD-Mann sitzt hier.*"

(Here, the Nazi is hanging on the wall, and the SPD(Socialist Party of Germany)-man is sitting here.)

Also, es war sehr schwer[für die], sich als Nationalsozialisten umzustellen. Die waren fanatische SPD und KPD, Kommunisten. Der größte Prozentsatz in Stadtlengsfeld waren Sozialdemokraten, und dann kamen Kommunisten und vielleicht zwei Prozent waren Nazis. Der größte Teil der population waren Arbeiter.

Wir hatten eine Porzellanfabrik [in our town] und Kalischächte, (137) wo die gearbeitet haben. [Es] Waren vielleicht Einige Landwirte. Auch im nächsten Ort, der hieß Weiler(?), ungefähr zwei Kilometer von uns entfernt. Alle Bauern waren keine Nazis. Die haben noch nicht mal die Nazifahne rausgehängt! Es kam mir immer vor, wenn ich nach Weiler ging, als wär' ich in einem anderen Land.

We had a butcher store. Even my grandfather owned that store and I was very much interested to become a butcher. Even [though] my parents, they were not for it. They wanted me to study. When I finished school, I think I was about fifteen years old, I started. I was an apprentice in our own business. With eighteen years I made my exam and became *Metzgergeselle*. (Butcher- Journeyman)

F.: Did you make your master's as a butcher?  
No, Da wurd' ich nicht mehr zugelassen.  
No, I was not accepted any more I don't know exactly the year, but it could have been 1934 or could have been 1935.

Es gab eine Fleischerinnung. Die Innung, ich glaub der Obermeister war in Facha, ungefähr 15 Kilometer von Stadtlengsfeld entfernt und die Innung hat beschlossen, dass kein Jude Meister werden darf. Später, bei meiner Auswanderung nach Amerika, war ja das Alles gar nicht nötig. Ich hätte noch nicht mal die Gesellenprüfung gebraucht, denn hier in USA fragt man nicht danach.

Ich hab' eine sehr schöne Jugendzeit in meinem Ort verbracht, obwohl ich Jude war. Aber Niemand hat danach gefragt. Ich konnte noch mich öffentlich in jedem Lokal sehen lassen und bin auch immer '33, '34 eventuell noch '35, zu einem öffentlichen Tanz gegangen und konnte mit allen christlichen

So, it was very difficult [for them] to turn themselves into National Socialists. They were fanatical, SPD (Socialist Party, Germany) and KPD, communists. The largest percentage in Stadtlengsfeld were social democrats, and then [in that order] came the communists and perhaps two percent were Nazis. The largest part of the population were workers.

We had a porcelain factory [in our town] and clay mines, where they worked. [There] Were perhaps some farmers. Also in the next village, its name was Weiler, about two kilometers distant from us. All the farmers were not Nazis. They did not even hang out the Nazi flag!

It always seemed to me, when I went to Weiler, as if I were in a different country.

Were you a Master?

No, There I was not admitted anymore.  
No, I was not accepted any more I don't know exactly the year, but it could have been 1934 or could have been 1935.

There was a Butcher's Association. The association, I believe the head master was in Facha, about 15 kilometer distant from Stadtlengsfeld, and the association decided that no Jew would be allowed to become a master.

Later on, when I emigrated to America, all this was no longer necessary. There wasn't even a need for me to have had my journeyman's exam, because here in USA nobody asks for it.

I spent a very beautiful youth in my home town, in spite of my being a Jew. But nobody cared about that.

I could still frequent any public place and could still in '33, '34, and perhaps, even in '35 go to Public dances and could dance with any

Mädels tanzen. Niemand erwähnte Religion, niemals hab' ich gemerkt dass ich irgendwie... niemals hat ich irgendwie Anstand als Jude.

But, dies ist ja nun nicht massgebend, mein Gott. Leider Gottes gab es nicht viel solche Plätze. Und wenn ich das heute Leuten erzähle, auch jüdischen Leuten, deutsch-jüdische Leuten, die glauben so etwas gar nicht, (200) weil die das nicht kannten. Denn es gab Ortschaften, Städte und kleinere Plätze, wo der Risches schon damals so groß war, daß die Juden [sich] kaum auf der Strasse konnten sehen lassen, ohne irgend einen Anstand zu bekommen.

F.: I am asking Fred if he knows anything about the bigger towns, like the town of Eisenach. Even in Eisenach!

Ich bin gern nach Eisenach gefahren. Ich muss sagen in ganz Thüringen war das Risches nicht so aufgetreten, wie in anderen Plätzen, wie zum Beispiel Plätze in Hessen, und so weiter.

I remember for instance in 1935:

Ich hatte einen sehr guten Freund, der wohl in Stadtlengsfeld geboren war, musste aber aus politischen Gründen Stadtlengsfeld verlassen. (226) Kein Jude, ein Arier, er musste Stadtlengsfeld verlassen, weil er zu viel politisch beteiligt war und gegen die Nazi kämpfte. Er verließ Stadtlengsfeld und ist nach Oberursel im Taunus, das ist near Frankfurt, untergetaucht.

In 1935 besuchte ich ihn und bin mit dem Motorrad gefahren nach Oberursel, und nahm seinen Bruder mit.

Als wir durch einige Ortschaften fuhren, das war natürlich nicht Thüringen. Zum Beispiel, wie hieß der Ort noch? Ich glaub Schlichtern oder was, da sagte der zu mir: Alfred, guck mal hier, da steht an: Juden sind hier nicht erwünscht. Und guck mal hier, die ham' Hakenkreuze am Haus. Das war der gar nicht gewöhnt. Der war ganz erstaunt. Denn bei uns in Thüringen gab's so etwas nicht.

Ich möchte noch erwähnen, dass wir trotz der Boykottierung unser Geschäft erhalten konnten, bis Mai 1938, wo [die] meisten jüdischen Geschäfte schon geschlossen wurden. Aber bei uns im Ort, wie schon vorher erwähnte,

Christian girl. Nobody mentioned religion, never did I notice that I was in anyway... never did I have any difficulties as a Jew.

But that is certainly not authoritative, my God. It's a shame that there were not many places like that. And when I tell people about this today, even Jewish people, German-Jewish people, they don't believe it, because the didn't know of (situations like) that. Because there were localities, cities and smaller places where the *risches* was already so widespread, that the Jews could not make an appearance on the street without running into problems.

I liked to travel to Eisenach. I have to remark, that in all of Thuringia, the risches was not so wide spread, like in other places, like for instance in places in Hesse and so on.

I remember for instance in 1935:

I had a very good friend. He had been born in Stadtlengsfeld, but had to leave Stadtlengsfeld for political reasons. No Jew, an Arian, had to leave Stadtlengsfeld because he had been too politically active and fought against the Nazis. He left Stadtlengsfeld and went underground in Oberursel, that is near Frankfurt.

I visited him in 1935 and rode my motorcycle to Oberursel and I took his brother along.

As we came through several towns, naturally, it was not Thuringia. For example, what was the name of the place again? I think, Schlichtern or something. There he says to me: Alfred, look over here, there it says: Jews not wanted here. And look over there, they have swastikas on their house. He was not used to that. He was quite surprised. Because with us in Thuringia we didn't have that.

I want to mention also that in spite of the boycotting we were able to keep our business going until May of 1938, when most Jewish businesses had been closed already.

waren die Leute gegen den Nationalsozialismus.

In 1938, das letzte, hatte mein Vater auf der Strasse... Wir haben ein Stück Vieh, ein Rind geholt. Und da kam ein Nationalsozialist, ein S.A. Führer uns entgegen und sagte, wir dürfen das Stück Vieh nicht reinführen, es müsste gefahren werden. Wir sagten, oder mein Vater, vielmehr, ich habe mich gar nicht an dem Gespräch beteiligt, er sagte: "Alle anderen Metzger," (wir hatten vielleicht vier bis fünf christliche Metzger in Stadtlengsfeld) "die tun das auch." Er [der S A Führer] sagte: „Aber sie sind Jude. Sie dürfen das nicht.“ So mein Vater hatte ein grosses Argument with him und darauf hin wurde die Sache angezeigt, wegen öffentliche Beleidigung eines Sturmbandführers und die Sache ging zu Gericht.

Zwei Tage später wurde mein Vater und ich verhaftet und in das Gefängnis in Stadtlengsfeld eingesperrt.

Mein Vater konnte das gar nicht verstehen, dass so Etwas passieren konnte. Aber ich hatte grosse Angst, dass uns die Nazis eines Tages abholen würden und uns ins Konzentrationslager bringen. So dachte ich darüber nach, wer kann uns helfen, wer kann uns helfen?

Da hatten wir einen Bürgermeister, der wurde auch eingesetzt von einer andern Gegend (F.: von der Partei?) weil er ein fanatischer Nationalsozialist war. Er war der Bürgermeister geworden, der Ortsgruppenführer und der Ortsbauernführer. So ich dachte, ich müsste mit dem mal sprechen, trotzdem er sich nie hat von Juden hat sprechen lassen. Wenn jemand am Telefon das Bürgermeisteramt anrief und den Namen erwähnte, hat er sofort eingehängt, weil's Juden sind. Ich habe mit dem Mann im Leben noch nie ein Wort gesprochen. Aber ich [habe] den Gefängniswarden gebeten, den Bürgermeister zu fragen, ob ich eine Unterredung mit ihm haben kann.

Darauf hin, zwei Tage später, hat er eingewilligt, gewilligt, dass ich ihn sprechen könnte.

Ich habe mit ihm ungefähr eine Stunde eine Unterredung gehabt. Und hab' ihm alles erzählt. Das ich besonnen bin und schon ins

But in our town, as I mentioned before, the people were opposed to National Socialism. In 1938, as one last thing, my father, in the street... We went to get a head of cattle, a calf. And there we encountered a National Socialist, a SA officer, and said, we couldn't lead the head of cattle home, it had to be transported. We said, or rather my father, (I didn't take part in the conversation) he said: "All the other butchers," (we had perhaps four or five gentile butchers in Stadtlengsfeld) „they are doing it too.“

He, [the SA leader] said: "But you are a Jew. You are not allowed to do this." So my father had a big argument with him and subsequently the matter was reported to the authorities for publicly insulting a SA officer and the matter went to court.

Two days later, my father and I were arrested and held at the prison in Stadtlengsfeld.

My father couldn't comprehend how something like that could have happened. But I was very much afraid that the Nazis would one day come to get us and put us into a concentration Camp. So I kept thinking, who can help us, who can help us?

We had a mayor, he was also brought in from a differed district, (F.: by the party?) because he was a fanatical National Socialist. He is the one who became mayor, [party] group leader and farmers group leader. So I figured, I should talk to him, in spite that he had never availed himself to speak to a Jew. When anybody called the office of the mayor by telephone, and mentioned a name, he would immediately hang up, if it was a Jew. I never in my life had a word with this man. But I asked the warden of the jail, to ask the mayor to grant me an audience.

On account of that, two days later, he agreed, agreed to let me talk to him.

I had an audience with him for about an hour. And I told him everything. How it was my intention to go to a foreign country

Ausland zu gehen und unser Geschäft aufzugeben und so weiter. Und hab' ich ihm mein Motorrad, was noch ganz neu war, versprochen, wenn er uns frei bekommt. So, um die Sache kurz zu machen, er hat... Es ist zu keiner Verhandlung gekommen. Von der Kreisleitung sollte es zur Verhandlung kommen. Er hat alles abgesagt und hat uns entlassen.  
Und da bin ich 1938, November, der 2. November 1938 bin ich aufs Schiff in Hamburg und nach USA.

Germany in 1936. My brother in law, Julius Blum, was born in Rothenburg an der Fulda. Ich bin mal dort gewesen in 1935. Da konnte sich schon kein Jude auf der Strasse sehen lassen ohne angepöbelt zu werden. Meine Schwester und brother in law, they left Germany in November 1936. But ich konnte mich zur Zeit noch nicht entschließen (314) . Aber kurz darauf, ein paar Monate darauf, habe ich mich entschlossen und mich mit ihnen in Verbindung gesetzt, dass ich so bald wie möglich Stadtlengsfeld verlassen wollte. So, der Grund, in 1938 war nicht dass ich nach USA bin, denn zwei Jahre lang hab ich das behandelt. Aber ich musste eine Bürgschaft haben und die immer nicht anerkannt wurde.  
Ich brauchte immer eine Zusatzbürgschaft und somit hat sich das zwei Jahre in die Länge gezogen. Und ich hätte gerne meine Eltern gleich mitgenommen, aber die Bürgschaft hat gerade ausgereicht für mich.  
Und so meine Eltern, sind leider, haben es nicht erlebt nach USA zu uns zu kommen, sondern sind nach Theresienstadt. Ich weiss nicht genau in welchen Jahr und das Datum.

(Conversation off microphon)

*Ich war dann noch mit meinen Eltern in Kontakt, ( then I was still in contact with my parents,) till 1942, when they wrote me in a letter, I think they knew in advance. Because they wrote in 1942, I don't know exactly the date, ab soundsovielten, (from that date on) we will be in Theresienstadt, ein Konzentrationslager. Und von da ab haben wir nie wieder etwas gehört, bis after the war.*

and to liquidate our business and so on. And I promised him my motorcycle, which was quite new, if he could get us set free. So, to make it short, he did... It never came to a trial. As far as the district leadership was concerned, it should [have] come to a trial. He cancelled everything and released us.

And so did I board a ship 1938, in November, the 2nd, in Hamburg for the USA.

My sister and family left  
I was there once in 1935. At that early time no Jew could let himself be seen on the street without being molested.  
My Sister and brother in law, they left Germany in November 1936. But I couldn't make up my mind at that time. But shortly thereafter, a few months later, I decided [to leave] and got in touch with them, [and told them] that as soon as possible I wanted to leave Stadtlengsfeld. So, this wasn't the reason in 1938 that I went to the USA, than for two years I worked on it.  
But I had to have an affidavit and it was never sufficient. The affidavits were never deemed sufficient.  
I always needed a secondary affidavit, therefore it had dragged out for two years. And I would have liked to take my parents along, but the affidavit was only just sufficient for me.  
And so my parents, unhappily, did not live to come to us in the US, but got to Theresienstadt. I don't know exactly the year and the Day.

(And from then on we never again heard anything [from or about them,] until after the war. (342)

**End.**

Notes by interviewer:

Alfred's parents, my uncle Hermann, and aunt Mehta, née Löwenstein, were in Theresienstadt, as were my parents. They saw each other there. My father recorded in his letters after the war, that they both died of, so called, natural causes.

Aunt Mehta: died January 28<sup>th</sup>, 1943, cause of death: Dysentery (Ruhr)  
He gives uncle Hermann's dates as: March 26, 1943, Cause of death: Blood poisoning (Blutvergiftung)  
Father expressed the thought to me, that uncle Hermann had given up.

I also want to corroborate another part of Freddy's story. In the summer of 1938, I spent my last vacation in Germany with him and his parents. Stadtlengsfeld was beautifully located in the heart of the *Thüringer Wald* (Forrest). I took a motorcycle trip with Alfred to Eisenach, where we stayed overnight with his relatives, Ferdinand Müller and family.

On that occasion we visited the Wartburg castle, a tourist attraction. The Wartburg is famous in the life story of Martin Luther and is used as the setting of Wagner's Lohengrin. On the occasion of my visit I experienced no anti-Semitic incidents, neither in Stadtlengsfeld nor in Eisenach.