

I'm Lisle Kulbach, granddaughter of Paul and Elsa Frankl. My mother was their third child, Johanna Kulbach. I'd like to thank Dr. Schneider-Stief and Frau Kupke for finding me, and for organizing this event. They have been extremely generous with their time, particularly Dr. Schneider-Stief, and very thorough in sleuthing out what took place to my family in Halle, where my family was, and their part in the general society of the time. It means very much to me, and to my family, many members of which are here. Thank you all for coming, and for your interest in what transpired in the past, that has led us to this moment.

*I would like to begin with a quote from The Baal Shem Tov, a Jewish mystic and healer from Poland who lived in the 1700s.*

The Baal Shem Tov used to go to a certain place in the woods and light a fire and pray when he was faced with an especially difficult task, and it was accomplished.

His successor followed his example and went to the same place but said: "The fire we can no longer light, but we can still say the prayer." And what he asked was done too.

Another generation passed, and Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sassov went to the woods and said: "The fire we can no longer light, the prayer we no longer know: all we know is the place in the woods, and that will have to be enough." And it was enough.

In the fourth generation, Rabbi Israel of Rishin stayed at home and said: "The fire we can no longer light, the prayer we no longer know, nor do we know the place. All we can do is tell the story."

And that, too, proved sufficient.

*The story in this case concerns both sides of my family, the Frankls on my mother's side, and the Kulbachs, on my father's side. Both sides of my family have a complicated story and relationship to the Nazis.*

***There were Nazis in my mother's mother's family, as well as in my father's family.***

**The story of the troubles for my family began in Halle. I'll begin with my grandfather, Paul Frankl. My grandfather, Paul Frankl, was born in 1878, in Prague, while Prague was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. His ancestors were the Frankl-Spira family, Jewish rabbis and Head Rabbis, Primators, for centuries, until 1781 when the emperor Joseph II declared an Edict of Toleration, an attempt to bring equality to the widely divergent ethnic groups in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. One result of this edict was the leveling of the court systems. The Jews had always had their own court system, where the rabbis were the judges. After the edict, the Jewish court was no longer independent. The rabbis lost their power. The Frankls moved into business, and became intercessors in the selling of grain.**

**But they weren't very good at business, and one generation went bankrupt, and then the next generation made good the losses.**

***By the time my grandfather was born, the cultural movement, the Jewish Enlightenment had begun. Moses Mendelssohn, the grandfather of Felix Mendelssohn, the composer, was the instigator of the movement, the crux of which was that Jews that spoke German, which the Jews of Prague spoke, as opposed to Yiddish, could and should be part of the German culture. Heine, the poet, was an example of this cultural cross pollination. Heine was born Jewish, converted to Lutheranism, and became the "German" poet of his generation. The Jewish Enlightenment was a step toward assimilation at a time of great anti-Semitism.***

**My grandfather, in order to receive a higher German education and profession, as well as to escape the claustrophobic atmosphere of Prague, stepped out of Judaism. He, among many other Jews, converted to Catholicism. After studying to be an architect in Berlin and Munich, he changed his focus to the study of art history, in particular Gothic architecture and medieval stained glass windows.**

***He graduated with honors, married my grandmother, lived in Gauting (outside of Munich), had 5 children, and in 1921 was hired to be a professor in Halle at the University. Thanks to Dr. Schneider-Stief, I was given the opportunity to look through the archives of the University Archives where I could see that when he was hired his labels were "Catholic, and a citizen of Bavaria."***

**By 1933, with the Nazi takeover of the government and hence, everyone needing to fill out a family tree of several generations that included religious affiliation, it became "important" that my grandfather was from a Jewish background, and by 1934-1935, he had been forcibly retired, as had many other Jewish public servants in Germany. By the Nazis, he was also forced to "sell" his houses, one here in Halle, and the other in Gauting, with many repairs he had to take care of which made the price he received for the houses almost negligible. Another house he owned in the Tirol he sold to students who had become lifelong friends.**

***Luckily he was out of the country when the SS came looking for him in Munich on Kristallnacht. He was in the US trying to get a job as a professor, traveling across the whole US lecturing. But his English was not good enough to give his lectures in English, so he needed a translator. The cost of hiring a translator was too great for a university to handle, and he did not procure a job. By that point, his eldest son, Peter, had died. Wölfli, the 2nd son had already left Germany in 1933 because he would not have been hired as an architect. He went to Italy with his wife and two girls. By 1938 however, Mussolini had turned against the Jews, and Wölfli fled to England where he stayed for 7 years. Johanna, my mother married Richard Kulbach in 1933, and I will come back to that. Susi, the next daughter fled with my grandmother after Kristallnacht, to Denmark, my grandmother on to England and then the US by 1943, and Susi to Sweden during the boat rescue operation. And Heka, the youngest, still 17, left for the US on a boat days after Krystallnacht.***

*There is more to these stories, as you can imagine, but, with the time I have left, I would like to concentrate on my parents.*

**My parents met in Halle. My father, Richard, had a son, Bernhard, from his first marriage to a woman named Irene. When she became pregnant, Irene had a recurrence of tb. When her child, Bernhard was born, he was immediately taken care of by Richard's older half-sister, Ella and her husband, Jo. Ella was unable to have children of her own. Ella and Jo moved too often to take care of Bernhard and he was transferred to his mother's side of the family. After Irene died, my parents married, May 13, 1933. Bernhard was given to my parents. By then he was 2 1/2 years old, onto his 4th mother.**

*My father was Protestant. He was part owner of a university bookstore in Halle, Hofstetter. When he married my mother, because she was considered Jewish, he was barred from entering the store. I have to add here that my mother knew nothing about the Jewish religion. She was brought up as a Protestant because on my grandmother's side, although my grandmother's father was Jewish, but a "disident", a non believer, her mother was Protestant. And actually, according to the Jewish religion, you become Jewish through your mother....so my grandmother was not Jewish, nor was my mother. As well, on my grandfather's side, my grandfather's mother was a disident, not holding a seder on Passover, one of the most important holidays. But the Nazis called my mother "a Jew, posing as a Christian." They called my mother's youngest sister, Heka, 'a non-Aryan Christian".*

**There they were in Halle, my mother having studied the Dalcroze Method of teaching music to children, but not able to teach because of her Jewish background, and my father going to trial about his non position in the store They were becoming destitute, trying to also take care of Bernhard. My father won the trial but was still not allowed to step into the store. The stipend he received was not enough to live on. He opened up a mail order business, but the Nazis soon closed that down. My parents went to Frankfurt to**

appeal to my father's half-sisters' husbands, who were both Nazis. They wouldn't help, saying to him, "If you would divorce Hannelies (my mother's nickname) we would help you." My father would not divorce my mother.

*Bernhard by now was 4 1/2. He went for a visit to Ella and her husband Jo in Frankfurt, and then they wouldn't give Bernhard back to my parents. Jo was an ardent Nazi, very much into the purity of the race. Ella said that my mother "was not fit to bring up a child." Another trial ensued. The judge was sympathetic to my parents, but the laws had become so skewed on the side of the Nazis that the only right my parents had left was not to allow the Höfers to adopt Bernhard.*

My father did not see Bernhard for the next 9 or 10 years, during which time Bernhard was sent to a Napola School, free schools to train elite boys to become SS officers. My parents moved to Berlin, where they spent the war years. My father retrained himself to fix radios and worked at Philips and Albert Patin. Considered unreliable, he was paid home visits by the Gestapo twice yearly. At some point, when the fixing of radios had been switched into working with radar under the auspices of the Luftwaffe, my father invented a gizmo for pilots to use. He was also given the job of checking the newly made gadgets before they were sent out. Not wanting Germany to win the war, he sabotaged his own invention, sending back the copies to be worked on again because "they weren't made well enough." He was constantly outwitting the Nazis, but this was dangerous, and not really good for a gentle soul like his.

*My mother meanwhile peeled potatoes under the supervision of the Gestapo for 3 years.*

In 1943 my parents were bombed out of their apartment in Berlin. The house burned to the ground. They kept trying to quell the flames with water, but a new kind of chemical material had been used for the bomb and they couldn't put the fire out. My mother

described to me (only once) the agony of hearing the destruction of the piano. I didn't realize until many years later that she was talking about her piano. My parents moved to students of my grandparents, and then to a cousin of my mother's, Loly Löslein, who was also in a mixed marriage with her husband Ernst. Ernst was also penalized by the Nazis, made to work in the OT toward the end of the war.

*By 1944 the factory my father worked at was bombed and my father had to work someplace else. He was punished by working at a factory that printed camouflage designs on material. He was made to work alone, 10 hours at a time, cleaning the printing presses with water, which did not clean the presses. The authorities sent him a threatening letter. "We know you are a Mischling and we are watching you. You may not talk with the foreign workers when we go to the Bomb Shelter." My mother said that my father always knew what was going on, so maybe he did talk with the foreign workers.*

When the war ended and the Russians came in to Berlin, it was chaos, and there was nothing to eat. All systems broke down.

*My parents both got jobs and moved to Weimar, the East Zone. The communists tried to get my father to join the Party, but my father told them he had not joined the Nazis, and he wouldn't join the communists. With enormous force of will, going to 100 different offices to get the right pieces of paper stamped, my parents were allowed to move back to Berlin because they had lived there already.*

They moved to Steglitz, the American Zone, where my father had procured a job as head librarian at the Dahlem Museum.

*I was born in Berlin, April 4, 1948. The Air Lift began when I was 2 months old. My mother said at first I cried with all that noise overhead every 3 minutes, but then I got used to it. My father died in a freak accident when I was 9 months old. One month later my*

*mother and I boarded an air lift plane out of Berlin to Frankfurt, and began our voyage to America. In America we were reunited with my grandparents, and my mother's two sisters. We lived in NY where my mother finally was able to teach children music. She became a prominent recorder teacher (blockflöte).*

**I wish there were an equivalent of a Stolperstein for people that were not Jewish who helped or defended Jews and others victimized by the Nazis. Right now I would like to Honor my aunt Gwennie who was denounced after she spoke out against the Nazis; my aunt Lenore, who hid German soldiers above her ceiling that had gone AWOL in Rome, and Ernst Löslein, who was sent to work in the OT because he was married to my mother's cousin. And there are so many more people. In the US these people are not really known. A final thought. One day while visiting my mother in NY, I was walking down a street near my mother's apartment and happened to glance at a wall 4 stories high at one end of an empty lot. A huge ivy plant was spread out across the wall, with many green leaves, seemingly very healthy. It looked just like one of those family tree depictions. At the bottom of the plant though, I noticed that the trunks of the plant were severed from the roots. I perceived at that moment that this was an image of how I felt, severed from my roots. Painful and disturbing as the story of my family is, with some of the roots of the story taking us to Halle, this ceremony and care of the people involved, is helping to join me and my family to our roots, and for that I am grateful.**