

How Frankfurt Has Handled the Holocaust Since 1980

Projekt Judisches Leben Frankfurt am Main

By Joe Freiberg

Since 1980, the City of Frankfurt am Main has organized a visitor program for former Jewish citizens of Frankfurt and those who were politically or religiously persecuted during National Socialism. Over 3,500 interested persons from all over the world have already participated in these events.

In 1994, my mother (Minna Lewin Freiberg), who was born in Germany, was invited and attended Projekt Judisches Leben Frankfurt as a first-generation Frankfurter. I applied to attend this program along with all four of my children. This past summer my daughter, Dara Beth, and I received invitations and spent a wonderful week in Germany.

This generous and heartwarming experience began the first night with a get-together and information session before dinner. Our group of 32 included some first-generation but mostly second- and third-generation Frankfurters. As we talked about our expectations, a fairly common remark was made that survivors, parents, and grandparents did not want to talk about their experiences. We all brought our family's stories while the first-generation members, some reluctantly, shared theirs. Our group unanimously wished we had asked our late family members more questions.



Memorial to the Borneplatz Synagogue where the Freiberg family attended.

The members of the association Projekt Judisches Leben in Frankfurt help the visitors to trace their families' roots as well as organize school talks with students.

Our itinerary included a guided city tour, a welcome reception hosted by the Jewish Mayor (Peter Feldmann), a visit to the Philanthropin School (which my mother attended as a student), the Jewish Lane Museum and Old Jewish Cemetery, and the East End High-Rise Bunker. There were many optional opportunities such as Shabbat services at local synagogues, a night at the opera or theatre, and interacting with high school students at many different area schools.

During our free time, my daughter and I visited several

places that linked directly to our heritage. We went to the location of my grandfather's tailor shop (Efroim Lewin married to Cypora), the hospital where my mother was born, and the area where her home and synagogue had been.

We also visited my father's (Alfred "Al" Freiberg) hometown of Winnweiler. While there, we met Sven Bischoff at the Bischoff Brewery. He is the grandson of the family that helped liberate my father out of Dachau and his family out of Germany. Meeting Sven was a highlight of this day. While exploring outside of Frankfurt, and as much as I did not want to,



Sven Bischoff with Joe Freiberg at the Bischoff Brewery.

I felt I needed to go to Dachau. It was a very cold and emotional experience. The museum there was very informative.

We met David and Becky Hirsch on the first night and



L-R: David Hirsch, Dara Beth, Angelika Rieber, Joe Freiberg, and Becky Hirsch.

bonded with them, as they too were a father-daughter pair as well as second- and third-generation guests. We spent Father's Day on a cruise down the Rhein River and they are our now lifelong friends.

We want to recognize and thank the City of Frankfurt and the program staff and guides for making our trip so memorable. We also want to single out Angelika Rieber (Chair of the Association Projekt Judisches Leben in Frankfurt) who went out of her way to make sure we were able to connect to our roots. Since meeting on our trip, Angelika has become another lifelong friend.

A resolution of the Frankfurt City Parliament provided that

the children and grandchildren of former Frankfurt citizens should also be invited to visit their parent's native town. Every year the Mayor invites on behalf of the municipality and the city council about 25 guests and a companion to a weekly visit to the former native town of your parents or grandparents.

The city assumes the cost of your flight, hotel accommodations with daily breakfast, receptions with interesting opportunities for contact and cultural events, a rover ticket for local public transportation on the S-Bahn, Underground, trams, and buses, and admission tickets to the Palmengarten, the Senckenberg Museum, the zoo as well as a Museum Embarkment-Ticket.

Were your parents or grandparents obliged to leave Frankfurt during the Nazi regime? Would you like to see the native town of your parents or grandparents and find out more about Frankfurt today?

Contact: Judisches Besuchsprogramm, Hauptamt und Stadtmarketing, Romerberg 23, 60311 Frankfurt am Main; <http://www.juedisches-leben-frankfurt.de/>

If your direct family roots were in Frankfurt before and during the Nazi-regime, this program could be an important step in your uncovering of your family's history and roots. ♣