



Our Family

by

Heinz and Thea Ruth Skyte, née Ephraim

ALFRED EPHRAIM (1884 - 1963)

My father Alfred Ephraim was born in Berlin on 5th October 1884.

BIRTH CERTIFICATE

No. 2843

Berlin, the 9th October 1884

The Merchant Julius Ephraim, identified by his Birth Certificate, resident in Berlin, Grosse Frankfurterstrasse 62, of the mosaic religion, appeared today before the undersigned Registrar and notified that on the 5th October 1884 at 4.45 a.m. at his apartment his wife Rosalie Ephraim née Levy, of the mosaic religion, resident with him in Berlin, had given birth to a male child, who had received the first name of Alfred.

Read approved and signed Julius Ephraim

The Registrar p.p. v. Hallerstein

It is certified that the above extract is the exact wording of the Main Birth Register of the Registry Berlin VII 9

Berlin the 17th January 1921 The Registrar Wenzel

After his formal education at a Realschule (Secondary School) Alfred entered a commercial apprenticeship as warehouseman, clerk and commercial traveller for a firm of linen manufacturers.

During World War I Alfred volunteered for military service. In 1915 he was with the 1st Reinforcement section of the Hirschberg Rifle Battalion and later served at the front in France and Flanders. He was awarded the "Iron Cross" second class. After spending some time in military hospitals he returned to the front as a telephonist of an Infantry Battalion.



Self portrait of Alfred Ephraim as soldier of the 1st Reinforcement Section Rifle Battallion No 5, 1915

(photo: Heinz & Thea Skyte)

Alfred enjoyed drawing and during the war illustrated most of his postcards home with pencil sketches.

After the end of the war Alfred left the army war and worked as correspondent for the "*Zentral-nachweiseamt fuer Kriegsverluste und Kriegsgraeber*" (Central War Casualties and War Graves Commission) until the end of 1923.

On 23rd February 1921 Alfred married Rosa Martha Koenig, daughter of Albert and Johanna Koenig, born in Pillkallen, East Prussia on 29th January 1891. She was a Protestant by birth. In 1920, however, she left the Evangelical Church to convert to Judaism. She received Jewish religious instructions from Rabbi Dr. L.Pick and lived for a time with a Jewish family, to learn religious customs etc. After all the necessary preparations and taking the ritual bath, she was accepted into the Jewish Community on 21st February 1921. Two days later on 23rd February 1921 Martha and Alfred Ephraim were married.

Marriage Certificate of Alfred and Martha Ephraim

Registry Berlin 11.

Register No 159

Valid only for the purpose of the Marriage Ceremony

(page 82 of the law of 6.February 1875)

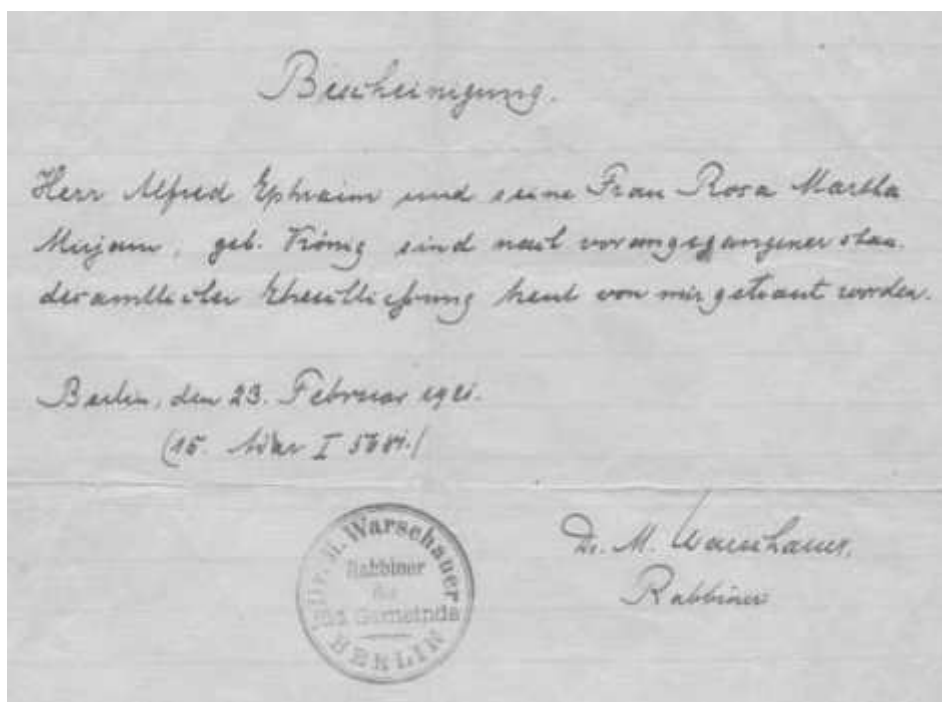
MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE

The Marriage between the Merchant Alfred Ephraim, resident in Charlottenburg, and the Dress-maker Rosa Martha Koenig, resident in Berlin, took place today before the undersigned Registrar.
The Registrar

Note: The law regarding the documentation of personal state and marriage of 6.2.1875 states in paragraph 82: "The religious obligations with regard to Baptism and Wedding are not touched by this law."

Their Jewish wedding ceremony was conducted by Rabbi Dr. Malvin Warschauer, the Rabbi of the "Neue Synagogue" Oranienburgerstrasse.

Jewish Marriage Certificate of Alfred and Martha Ephraim:



(photo: Heinz & Thea Skyte)

Translation:

CERTIFICATE

After their previous Registry Office Wedding Mr. Alfred Ephraim and his wife Mrs Rosa Martha Mirjam nee Koenig were married by me to-day.

Berlin, the 23rd February 1921

Stamp: Dr M. Warschauer, Rabbi of the Jewish Community Berlin.

signed Dr M. Warschauer, Rabbi

Martha and Alfred set up home with Martha's parents, Albert and Johanna Koenig, in a second floor apartment at Gartenstrasse 9, where Martha had also established a small sewing workshop in 1913, some years before her marriage.

Martha and Alfred had one daughter: Thea Ruth Ephraim, born 21 April 1923 in Berlin.



Martha, Thea and Alfred Ephraim, 1926

(photo: Heinz & Thea Skyte)

In 1924, after leaving the "*Zentralnachweiseamt fuer Kriegsverluste und Kriegsgraeber*", Alfred took over the workshop. He expanded it by adding several specialities, such as pleating, buttonholing, button making, interlocking etc. Martha and Alfred took shop premises at Gartenstrasse 26 where, apart from the workroom, they also established a retail business selling linen, haberdashery and drapery. They also moved to their own apartment at Blankenfelderstrasse 27, not far from the well-known "*Alexanderplatz*".

Hitler came to power on 30th January 1933 and persecutions of Jews soon started. Further expansion planned for the family business in larger premises on the main street opposite the busy Stettiner Bahnhof became impossible. The family eventually had to give up their apartment and moved into one room behind the shop in Gartenstrasse.

In 1935 Alfred had received the "*Ehrenkreuz fuer Frontkaempfer*", a medal for soldiers, who had served at the front during World War 1914/18 founded by the German President, Fieldmarshall General von Hindenburg. It was given "In the name of the Fuehrer and Chancellor". In view of the ever increasing persecution Alfred refused to accept this, as did many other Jews, and returned it together with his Iron Cross, the distinction he had been awarded in the war.



Certificate for the "Ehrenkreuz fuer Frontkaempfer", 1935

(photo: Heinz & Thea Skyte)

Alfred had been a member of the "*Berufskrankenkasse der Kaufmannsgehilfen*", a private health insurance, since 1902 which also included his wife Martha and daughter Thea from April 1923 onwards. In a letter dated 23 August 1939 he was informed by the health insurance that he and his family had been expelled as from 31 May 1939 and were no longer eligible to health care under this.

Hamburg 23.8.39

We are informing you herewith that your membership of our health insurance which was necessary for reasons of your occupation, according to paragraph C No 5a of regulations of our insurance, has been cancelled as from 31.5.1939. Your claims on our insurance, as well as the extension cover of your family has been cancelled as from that date.

On the night of 9/10 November 1938, the "*Reichskristallnacht*", when synagogues were burned, Jewish premises damaged, ransacked and looted. Martha and Alfred's shop, together with all others owned by Jews, was daubed with swastikas and windows were broken. After that Alfred and Martha were no longer permitted to carry on their business. Their daughter Thea was forced to leave school and, at the age of fifteen years, emigrated to England on 16th January 1939 on a "*Kindertransport*".

Martha, as well as Thea, constantly carried a document stating that they were members of the Jewish Community, as Alfred had been stopped in the street and been accused of associating with "*Aryans*".

Martha and Alfred desperately tried to find some way of emigrating. Only women under the age of 45 years were then still able to get work permits to enter Britain as domestic servants. All others

had to prove that they would be able to emigrate to other countries and had to find sponsors, who would guarantee their upkeep until such time, when they would be able to leave Britain again. Martha and Alfred were unable to find such a sponsor or guarantor.

It was decided that Martha should come to England for a visit to see her daughter and possibly try personally to find a job. She received a British Visa on 23rd August 1939, but war broke out before she could leave. Had Martha, however, been able to leave Germany at that time, it is almost certain, that Alfred would not have survived.



Martha's visa for Great Britain, August 1939

(photo: Heinz & Thea Skyte)

Persecution increased constantly. Much pressure was put on "non-Jewish" partners to leave their husbands and apply for a divorce. Martha, however, steadfastly held to her adopted religion and remained a member of the Jewish community of Berlin. Martha and Alfred had to surrender their radio. Jews were not allowed to use any public facilities, such as telephones etc. or to use public transport. They had to observe a strict curfew.

Alfred, as all male Jews, had had to take the additional name of "Israel" and had to carry a special identity card with the letter J for "Jew" on it:



(photo: Heinz & Thea Skyte)

He was forced to wear the yellow star with the word "Jude" written in black:



(photo: Heinz & Thea Skyte)

Jews were issued with special household certificates marked with "J", which had to be presented before new ration cards were issued, allowing them only reduced rations. Shopping was limited to one hour a day, between 4 and 5 p.m. In September 1942 rations were still further restricted. Jews no longer received ration cards for meat, milk, cigarettes, clothing or white bread.

The special Ration Cards for vegetables and groceries marked with the letter "J" or overprinted with multiples of "Jude":



(photo: Heinz & Thea Skyte)

Some are stamped "*ungültig*" (invalid), meaning Jews were not entitled to these rations. Neither were Jews entitled to register for certain items of food, such as coffee and products containing cocoa. Alfred was fined for having registered for these:

The Mayor of the District Mitte of Berlin, Capital of the German Reich

Ministry of Food, Berlin Stralauer Strasse, 2nd May 1941

DECISION OF FINE

You have registered with a retail distributor for the supply of Coffee and received Cocoa products, although you, as a Jew, were not entitled to these.

Proof:

1. Your confession 31.10.1940
2. Your Berlin Ration Document

Your conduct is an offence against consumer regulations of 6.4.1940

Mr Alfred Israel Ephraim, Berlin N4, Gartenstrasse 26.

By Recorded Delivery

Because of this misconduct I order you to pay a fine of RM 60. The fine in addition to the under-mentioned costs is to be paid within one week to War Income and Expenditure Section D, Post 4, at the Municipal Pay Office Mitte, quoting the above reference. In accordance with paragraph....you can appeal in writing to the Ministry of Food for a ruling by the Court within one week of receipt of this decision. The time limit is also satisfied by receipt of application by the District Court. The

Court action is subject to costs. Failure to pay the fine and costs within the time limit will result in coercive proceedings being instituted.

Stamp

Signatures

Certified: Signatures

Costs:

1. Fee for the issue of Decision of fine RM 3.--
2. Expenses: cost of delivery of official notification RM 0.46

RM 3.46

As most male Jews, Alfred was forced to work as a labourer in an armament factory. In 1942, as a result of an accident whilst working on an old unguarded machine, he lost two fingers and part of a third. He was to suffer through this injury for the rest of his life. After the accident, no longer fit for that particular work, he was forced to work as a railway transport labourer at the Goerlitzer Bahnhof, one of the railway stations in Berlin. To enable him to get there, he was issued with a special permit, allowing him to use the tram or underground for this journey.

5. Police District

POLICE PERMIT

This permit is only valid in connection with an Identity Card with photograph.

Only valid within Berlin

The Jew Alfred Israel Ephraim, Labourer, born 5.10.1884 in Berlin, resident at N 4, Gartenstrasse 26, Nationality - German, Identification - Identity Card, is hereby given permission to repeated use trams or the underground between Berlin N 4 and Goerlitzer Station and back between 2.6.44 and 1.6.45

Stamp

Signature

Chief Constable in Berlin

This Police Permit is not valid as a Travel Pass

From 1941 onwards Jews started being deported from Berlin, but partners of mixed marriages were for some time excluded from deportation. Great pressure was put on the non-Jewish partners to separate and apply for divorce. Any such action was a certain death sentence for the Jewish partner of the marriage.

"FABRIKAKTION"

On 27 February 1943 the so-called "*Fabrikaktion*" took place. Most Jews still remaining in Berlin, practically all doing forced labour in armament factories, were collected from their places of work, and deported to Auschwitz. For some reason or other partners of mixed marriages, Alfred amongst them, were, however, taken to a collection camp set up at Rosenstrasse 2/4, formerly one of the administration buildings of the Social Services of the Jewish Community of Berlin. Spontaneous demonstrations started the following morning, when wives had discovered their husbands whereabouts. Several hundred wives, Martha amongst them, constantly protested outside for over a week, shouting "*Gebt unsere Maenner frei!*" (Release our husbands), until the men were finally released. Alfred was released on 8th March 1943. These demonstrations by the so-called "*Aryan*" partners of mixed marriages extending for over a week must rank as one of the few public acts of resistance against the Nazis, which moreover was successful, in that it achieved the release of most of those arrested.



Memorial at Rosenstrasse 2/4 remembering the "Fabrikaktion"

(photo: Heinz & Thea Skyte)

Martha was also doing forced labour as a machinist, mostly sewing uniforms. In 1944, on an order under the "*Vierjahresplan*" (a law of 1939), she was ordered to report to still another workshop, where she was to work as an "unskilled apprentice" on the day shift from 6.45 a.m. to 5.20 p.m.

On 20 June 1944 Alfred was again arrested and held until 25 August 1944 in a camp in Schulstrasse in Berlin, probably a building belonging to the former Synagogue Schulstrasse.

During attacks on Berlin towards the end of the war on 1 May 1945, Martha was hit by shrapnel, which caused a wound on her cheek and a broken jaw. Happily both Alfred and Martha survived the Hitler persecution and the war.

In 1946, in support of Martha and Alfred's application to be recognised as "Victims of Fascism", the Social Welfare Department of the Jewish Community in Berlin certified that both Alfred and Mar-

tha were members of the Jewish Community of Berlin and that during the war both had held the Jewish Household Certificate. They also certified that Alfred had worn the Yellow Star. Both were recognised as "*Opfer des Faschismus*" (Victims of Fascism). According to a decision of the Council of 3 December 1945 this entitled Alfred to be treated for tax purposes like people with a 50% reduction in earning capacity on income attained after 1 October 1945.

District Office Mitte of Greater Berlin

Department of Social Service

Office "Victims of Fascism" Berlin 28. February 1949

Certificate

Valid only for production at Food Ration Offices, invalid for other purposes.

According to instructions of the Berlin City Council, Head Office "Victims of Fascism" it is certified:

Mrs Martha Ephraim N 54 Lothringerstrasse 80 has through persecution in the Nazi period suffered in health and therefore comes under the order of the Allied Command of 29. September 1945.

I, Thea their daughter, who had in the meantime married in England, wanted my parents to come to settle there. It was very difficult to get work permits in England. Martha and Alfred were also very anxious to re-establish themselves and felt that they were not yet ready to make such a move.

Having been forced to close their business in 1938 and having lost all their machinery, they were eventually given the chance of picking up the threads of their lives, when they were allocated shop premises and machinery at Lothringerstrasse 80 (later Wilhelm Pieckstrasse 62) and also an apartment on the second floor of the same house. They set to build up a business and a home again. They wanted their daughter and son-in-law to return to Germany, but the latter felt unable to undertake such a move. A return to Germany for them was out of the question.

In 1950 Martha suffered a slight stroke from which she partially recovered, but which left her with a weakness of her right hand. Alfred and Martha spent several holidays in England. They eventually gave up their business and retired. Martha's physical condition deteriorated more and more, though together they managed to cope and look after themselves.

At the beginning of 1963 Alfred became ill and, after a short period in hospital, died in Berlin on 8th February 1963.

DEATH CERTIFICATE

Alfred Ephraim

Registry Berlin-Mitte No 380/1963

Alfred Ephraim, resident Berlin, Wilhelm Pieckstrasse 62, died on the 8th February 1963 at 12.20 in Berlin.

The deceased was born on 5th October 1884 in Berlin

The deceased was married to Martha Ephraim nee König

Berlin, the 12th February 1963 Chief Registrar

Birth of the deceased:

Registry: Authentication not proven.

Martha survived her husband, but was physically and mentally very frail and was no longer able to live on her own and look after herself. In view of her medical condition her doctor considered a move to England was no longer possible. At the end of February 1963 Martha entered the Old Age Home of the East-Berlin Jewish Community in Niederschoenhausen. She was eventually moved from there to a Home for Incurables, where she died on 30th May 1965.

GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

DEATH CERTIFICATE

Registry Berlin-Pankow No 682/1965

Martha Rosa Ephraim nee Koenig resident Berlin-Blankenburg Nursing Home died on 30.May 1965 at 11 o'clock in Berlin-Blankenburg. The deceased was born on 29. January 1891 in Pillkallen. The deceased was widowed.

Berlin-Pankow, the 31.May 1965

Chief Registrar

Both Alfred and Martha Ephraim are buried on the Jewish Cemetery in Berlin Weissensee.



Grave of Alfred and Martha Ephraim (Z1 - 4 113967 / 114094), 1990

(photo: Heinz & Thea Skyte)

Note: The name on the Death Certificate and the inscription on the tomb stone are incorrect. Although Martha Ephraim was always known as Martha, her actual name was Rosa Martha and not Martha Rosa.