

## **Story of Franz Liepmann and his daughter Ursula Liepmann**

### **Franz Liepmann**

A Stolperstein\* for Franz Liepmann October 3, 1889 - March 1, 1943

His great-grandson, Mark Liepmann, came up with the idea of setting a Stolperstein for Franz Liepmann when he found out about the life and death of his great-grandfather at a family reunion in Berlin in 2019.

When it became clear in the early 30s how political developments would develop in Germany, friends and family urgently advised our grandfather to emigrate to England or the USA. Our grandfather refused because he was convinced that he had served as a good German in World War I and was honored with the Iron Cross for it, so that nothing would happen to him. He recognized this fatal error too late. He had his daughter, Ursula Liepmann, declared of legal age at the age of 18, because his wife, the daughter of a banker, was overwhelmed with everyday issues, such as dealing with public offices, etc.. His daughter should take on this responsibility.

Our grandfather was a fur trader and ran a business with a partner. When the political situation came to a head, the partner bought his share for very little money. The business partner promised that when "this was all over", the old status would be restored. This never happened, and there was no restitution/compensation whatsoever from the state, on the grounds that Franz Liepmann was not expropriated, but had sold the business.

Franz Liepmann was already deported to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp at the time of the Reichspogromnacht, 9 – 10 November 1938. Our grandfather was released from Sachsenhausen 16 December 1938.

Several stories are circulating about the release from the concentration camp. Had his daughter Ursula achieved this-as she told some family members-or had our great-uncle, Walter Reuter, major in the Air Force, successfully campaigned for him? After this release, Franz Liepmann was assigned into forced labour at Siemens, between 24 January 1941 to 2 February 1943. He was probably warned on 1 March 1943, either by this great-uncle, or by a colleague at Siemens, that the Nazis were picking up all the Jews.

It was clear to our grandfather that he would never again expose himself to the humiliations of a concentration camp, so he decided on death by choice, "Freitod". Hiding was out of the question for him because it would have meant harassment for his family. He said goodbye to his family, made his daughter promise to care for her mother for the rest of her life, retired to the bedroom by himself and took cyanide.

As our mother said, he lay there "peacefully" when he was dead.

When the Nazis wanted to pick up our grandfather, our mother said: "He is in the bedroom, you can take his body with you."

Franz Liepmann was a very elegant, proud and self-determined man. He saw his decision to end his life not as an escape, but as a self-determined act: he was faced with the

choice of either hoping, against all odds, that he might survive the concentration camp after all, albeit severely degraded, or making the decision to end his life with dignity.

Franz Liepmann found his final resting place in Bad Soden a/Ts.

The principle of self-determination runs like a red thread through the life of the Liepmann family.

The name LIEPMANN lives on. When our parents married, they decided to keep our mother's name, in honor of Franz Liepmann. His three grandchildren, their wives and children keep this name alive.

### **Tochter Ursula Liepmann**

How did the life of Ursula Liepmann (daughter of Franz Liepmann) continue?

As the daughter of a Jew during the Third Reich, Ursula L. could not continue to attend high school despite good performance and was no longer allowed to remain on the swimming team.

Therefore she completed an apprenticeship and worked for a company as a secretary until the end of the war.

After the war Ursula and her mother, Clary, moved to her mother's family home in Bad Soden am Taunus. Ursula stayed with her mother, in line with her promise to her father. In Frankfurt/Höchst, Ursula worked in the mess hall for the American military, being responsible for communication with the German employees due to her good knowledge of English.

Unfortunately, her dream of becoming a doctor could not come true.

She met Arne, who in 1948 became her husband, at a bridge game. During the war he had worked on the supply ship for the U-boat fleet as a buyer. His international work and access gave him the opportunity to support his sister in helping Jews escape from the Nazis in Germany. This sister was later caught and murdered by the Nazis in Amsterdam. His parents blamed him for her death, resulting in Arne not ever having any contact with his family.

Arne took Ursula's maiden name at the wedding, out of respect for Franz Liepmann and to let the Liepmann name live on.

In addition to raising her sons, Frank, Dirk and Holger, she was very successful in selling and exporting vehicles to the USA.

Starting in 1950, Arne Liepmann worked for Trans World Airlines (TWA) in several cities worldwide, responsible for purchasing, stores and commissary (entire supply on the aircraft). The family lived in Bad Soden am Taunus, until Arne, while still working for TWA, was transferred as a consultant to Trans Mediterranean Airways in Beirut, Lebanon in 1967, and to Saudia Airlines, in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia in 1970.

After roughly 25 years Arne retired from TWA, and he and Ursula moved to California, first living with friends, and then in their own home. Arne passed away in 1986. Ursula continued to live in California, visited her three sons, now spread over three continents (Asia, USA, Europe), and played active duplicate bridge until the end of her life.

Noteworthy: Ursula and Arne Liepmann kept their awful experiences during the Third Reich a secret from their children and their acquaintances for a long time. Apparently they didn't want to burden their children with the history in order to give them a carefree life and leave everything terrible behind.

Ursula had a very strong will which she maintained until her last days: "I will never be dependent on anyone". She successfully stood up for others; her eyes lit up when she was happy but she was also able to express her anger extremely clearly.

All sons were professionally successful. Ursula was happy to have seven grandchildren, three "step-grandchildren" and three great-grandchildren, in whose lives she took a keen interest. She was valued and loved by all. One of her granddaughters lived her dream of becoming a doctor.

Throughout her life she demonstrated a few key characteristics: very stubborn, very smart and dedicated, and very positive. When she passed in 2009 she left a note stating "I had the best life possible".

Text: Dirk and Kuni, Holger and Lorraine Liepmann

\* Stolperstein – direct translation 'stumbling stone' is a [sett](#)-size, ten-centimetre (3.9 in) concrete cube bearing a [brass](#) plate inscribed with the name and life dates of victims of Nazi extermination or persecution.

The *Stolpersteine* project, initiated by the German artist [Gunter Demnig](#) in 1992, aims to commemorate individuals at exactly the last place of residency—or, sometimes, work—which was freely chosen by the person before he or she fell victim to Nazi terror, [euthanasia](#), [eugenics](#), deportation to a [concentration](#) or [extermination camp](#), or escaped persecution by emigration or free death (decision to end the life).