



Elsa and Fred Frank's wedding reception at the Adler home, December 1941.

*Back row:* Stephen Onto, Sam Adler, Willie and Edith Zinner, Otto and Edith Enston, Karli Meister, Ann Onto, Bobby Sheldon, Mrs Hirschman, Dr Shlafbrig, Jenni Sheldong, Vilma Adler.

*Middle row:* Eve Zinner (senior), Eugene Berger, Rudolph Goldburger, Elsa, Fred, Mama Rosa Goldburger, Greta Kalmar, Max Adler.

*Seated front row:* Hans and Eva Gerald, Mrs Berger, Hannah Zinner, Renee and Ted Adler.

*Fred Frank was born in Berlin, Germany, in April 1919. His family had their roots in Poland, Czechoslovakia and the Rhineland. Fred grew up in Berlin where he attended a Jewish school. His father, who was employed as a cantor in a synagogue, died in the gas chambers at Auschwitz. Fred was the only survivor of a large extended family. He emigrated to Australia in 1938 under the auspices of the Australian Jewish Welfare Society. An electrician, his qualifications were unacceptable in Australia. After retraining he practised his trade in Western Australia until retirement some years ago. When war was declared Fred was interned as an enemy alien, but eventually released. He married Elsa Goldberger, a Viennese refugee in Perth in 1941. They celebrated their golden wedding two years ago. They have two sons and four grandchildren. The eldest son Ron was married in the Perth Hebrew Congregation synagogue to Valerie Trobe. Robert married a girl from Melbourne whom he met at a B'nei B'rith convention, the fifth generation of her family to be married at the St Kilda Synagogue.*

My original name was Fritz Simon Joseph. That was a Jewish name and I changed my name because I felt that Fred - Frederick - was more Anglicised and was easier to pronounce and that's the only reason. It was done during the war time.

The family name of Frank I can prove back to the year 1720. First, one of my ancestors was a nice fellow who got jailed by the Archbishop of Krakow for sedition, and then Poland was overrun and the Empress of Russia gave an order to let all the jailbirds out. He went to Turkey and was engaged in trading carpets, and so on. He came back to Poland

and then went into what we call today Sudetenland. It's Czechoslovakian. He then went into the Rhineland living over there. I have quite a few records from the Catholic Church. My father went to Berlin after the first World War and got married when the war broke out. They were married in a Registry Office. By 1925 my mother had 'needled' him a lot and they got married under the *chupah*.

He was engaged in communal affairs with the Returned Soldiers League having fought in the first World War and been decorated. Before moving to Berlin he lived in Frankfurt but before that he lived in Paris for a few years. Between the fast women and the slow horses he spent all his money. He enjoyed life; good luck to him. He was one of the few people - I never met one in Perth - who could read the Sefer Torah and read on the handwritten part in the scroll as to how you should sing the *Nigun*. During the depression he lost his job and got a job as a second chazan in a little shule in Berlin which had about two thousand three hundred people. He was a second cantor, his voice was not that good and he ran the weekly service in the small shule. Then he saw the light and I was registered with the immigration authorities.

I was in a Jewish college. We had a statue of Moses Mendelssohn in the front and he was buried in the back. Next to the shule we had a Jewish old peoples' home. In Hitler's time it was used to collect all the Jewish people before they were sent to the extermination camps. My father was amongst them in 1942. I was told the date when he went into Auschwitz and was gassed. As I said, I went to the Jewish college. In 1933 my father said "It's no good, you've got to learn a trade", so I became an electrician. You might have heard of Abe Troy. He was one of those people who promised me a job and got somebody over in the Eastern States to make the permit and pay for it. When I came here naturally there was no job, but the offer was made in order to get people out.

I came via Woburn House in England. I left Germany with roughly sixteen shillings. Woburn House kept me for a while. It was the English Jewish Welfare Society. You see the German Welfare Society at the time organised my leaving. I registered with them, and they said "There's a vacancy for an electrician in Australia." I left because of anti-semitism. We realised in 1937 what was going on and in 1938 I had the chance so I got out. I was the only survivor of my family. I had no brothers or sisters. The rest of the family - aunties and so on - were all killed including my father. My mother had died in 1930. We

had a flu epidemic in the thirties and had no penicillin in those days. It went right through Europe and decimated quite a number of the population. I came on a German ship. My fare from Berlin to London had been paid for by the Jewish Welfare Society. I came to London and stayed in a boarding house in Hampstead Heath.

My intention was to come to Australia. I already had my ticket through the Australian Jewish Welfare Society. I think it was arranged in Melbourne or Sydney, I don't remember the full details about the permit. Then I came to Adelaide and Rabbi Rubin Zacks picked me up. He was very cool. It was as though he had to do the job. He took me to his home and he recited the blessing over bread and wine. Strange to him, apparently, I gave the right answers. I could do them as well as he could. He then changed completely and he couldn't do enough for me and he put me on a boat to come to Perth.

My original journey was on a freighter which sailed from Antwerp to Adelaide non-stop. It took about five weeks. It was at the same time as Vienna was taken over by the Nazis.

When we arrived in Perth, Vera Rosenwax picked me up off the boat. The first thing she said "Have you had breakfast yet?" I said "No." And she took me up to Moana Chambers. It appears I was the only one who never ordered bacon and eggs.

I was then taken to Harold Casper. The first question was "Where's the cheque?" The Welfare Society in England gave you landing money for your arrival in Australia. In those days it was £40. That was the first thing taken away, but it didn't matter. They put me into a boarding house run by Ralph Finkelstein's mother. I stayed there for a while, and then later went to Mrs Edelman in Regent Street and then to Mrs Biger in Fitzgerald Street. I was about nineteen in those days. I was good looking and slim and had no mother-in-law. That's why my wife married me. I had a trade and I earned a living.

When I arrived Alec Breckler knew somebody and got me a job at which I worked for about a year. The jobs were only short-lived in the electrical trade. You see in those days the contractors had a certain amount of work and then you finished. When the war came they didn't know what they were doing here and were all upset. Everybody was interned. Everybody from Europe. They won't talk about it because they don't like it known. I was amongst them, and seeing I

was single and definitely not Jewish-looking, the authorities sent me back to the Eastern States. I was there for about six months. I was in camp. We didn't suffer. It was an army camp and we lived among German merchant seamen.

There were other Jews there. Some from Melbourne, Sydney and some from Perth. I'd never seen them. I wrote a letter one day to a friend here, to my intelligence officer. It was one of the Masels, I don't remember which one, saying that this is the first time I had never spent the holidays in a *shule*. It must have had some results and I got released. I came over there, and my mouth's pretty big, and I said "If I catch the so-and-so who put me in there I'll give him a good hiding. And that was that.

Then I met my wife at Princes Hall. This was the hall behind the synagogue. At the time the Jewish community really organised dances and socials and God knows what, picnics, etc. and were really concerned about the local Jewish population and they all went there. It was a good community in those days and I still remember one big fight. There was one Jewish person - he was a prisoner of war in the first World War and he was all for everybody joining up and the other was a red ragger and I can't say it, it's against the laws - and he was the other way round. We had some good discussion groups with Abe Troy and we had the Yiddish Theatre. It was a good life, but once you got married you sort of drifted away from it.

So I got married and the kids grew up. They went to Hebrew school and it wasn't a bad life. We didn't know from one week to the other if we would have enough money to live on. One day a nice letter from England: "Dear Mr Frank. We helped you when you were in need (this was after the war, about 1946,47) we also need some help now. What about repaying the money we advanced you." So I thought, Lord Almighty, I got married just now, how am I going to find that much money in one hit? So I wrote a letter back: "I agree, you're right. But I haven't got the money to give you in one hit. Would you be happy to take time payment?" Apparently I must have been the only one who answered back. Because of restrictions I couldn't send it out, so I offered to pay the money to the Jewish Welfare Society, Harold Casper, at the time. They accepted with pleasure. So for a while I paid a pound a week, until I paid it back. All.

Long after the war the second wave of immigration came from Poland. They smuggled in transistors and God knows what. One little chap was caught with fifty transistors and nearly went to jail. Eventually they were all sent over east and what happened to them I don't know, but I don't think any of them did badly. They all had their hard times, but eventually they all came good. I remember Stefan Onto who was a boxer in Europe and became a masseur here. There were the Pulfers. They were horse farmers and cattle dealers. That was quite an occupation in Germany and they'd been fattening cattle and then selling them. They owned a farm in Harvey and did quite a bit for the dairy industry there, I understand. He was pretty knowledgeable. The daughter became a nurse and then she married a chap by the name of Lloyd Benjamin from Adelaide. There was a sister or brother. He came from upper Silesia. He was a hardware merchant. The same as the Freys. They were all inter-related somehow.

I made out a list once of those who came at the same time as me. Kostalitz, who changed his name to Kosta, and is over eighty years of age now, and was a baker. He married a Jewish nurse in the Eastern states and came back to Perth to live. They have one daughter who became a police woman in New South Wales. The Smetanas came. There was a Dr Eisenstein, a lawyer. There was a Frey family - a father and mother and three sons; Fred, Ernie and Walter. Walter died recently. Fred died a while back. There was Harry Stern whom I actually told to come here. He was an electrician. There were three girls who came and started a boarding house in West Perth. One of them was Henny Steinhardt. I don't remember the other two. There was Mr Breitbath. He had a sausage factory in Beaufort Street. There was Jack Rothman. He didn't mix much in the Jewish community. There's Mrs Pascoe - she's a widow now. Then there are the two Schlafrig brothers - one was an architect and the other a doctor. There's a Kohn family and they are Polish. The Lederers, Eva the daughter married Ralph Finklestein. They came from Czechoslovakia. Dick Farago a Hungarian. Ken Arkwright from Germany. The Besters were Austrian. Richard Rice and his wife who are both from Vienna. Some of these came after the war in the last wave from 1945, but most of them came before the war. After the war some more came and we had a lot of English migrants.

Through my work association, I was in a union and was appointed as an interpreter during the war. I was on the committee where they recognised the qualifications of the tradesmen coming from all over the

world. Whilst interviewing people I would offer them help and on the reply was "I don't want to belong any more, I've had enough being a Jew. Leave me alone. I'll take my chances." This didn't happen just once, it happened several times and these people completely disappeared from Jewish life. These were South African and English Jews. I met others driving buses. Apparently when they went to *shule* certain part of our people looked down on them and made them feel small, so they said "To hell with it. I'm in a new country." But the Jews from Poland and Russia had a different background. They were quite helpful. I would help tradesmen get recognition or to fill out the forms for the Free Loan Society. Once they got the money they didn't need help any more.

I myself had a German certificate, but it was not recognised here and I had to requalify. The exams - the first ones I failed, of course, as I just couldn't understand the questions, although I learned English in school and Hebrew as a main language. Also English, French and Spanish. We could finish from my schools with a PhD as a rabbi. I went to an ordinary school for the first four years, then I had an entrance examination and I passed and got in on a scholarship. The school was very good, but they taught us everything else but maths. I took correspondence courses with Melbourne and also the Canadian Correspondence Schools and I finished up with the same qualification as Abe Troy and Harry Stern. We were the only electricians with an A ticket. It wasn't easy to get and I had to sit for exams here too. I elected to teach it while working and had twelve apprentices a year for about twenty-five years. People still come up to me but I can't remember them all. When I first came here there were great differences in the electrical trade.

There were so many magnificent *shules* in Berlin - roughly one hundred and sixty different ones. There were little ones and big ones. The Jews of Berlin were a mixed lot. The *shule* where my father was had an organ in it. I would say it catered for the middle class. You have to understand German Jews. In one *shule* they had an iron curtain and it could wind up so the altar and everything disappeared behind it and they used it as a concert hall. It was as orthodox as the Brisbane Street *shule* despite the organ. The average German Jew who went to the *cheder* knew more than some of the orthodox Jews here.

When I lost my mother we were living in a block of flats and there was a Polish group who had their *shule* there. I went every night to say

*kaddish* and I attended services regularly when I was growing up. I had to go to school on holidays but Saturday I went to a service.

I was very lonely when I first came here, but I would go to the pictures and dancing and later on I got more assimilated and went to the Princes Hall and met my wife there. Families with daughters invited me but I felt they were too anglicised. My wife, who is from Austria, had a similar background to me, her family were tradesmen. We were married in the *shule* in 1941. I had already been interned and returned.

Mrs Vilma Adler was related to my wife's family and gave the wedding breakfast. We had a group of migrants who came here before the war, assimilated and brought up the children, and now here we are and I'm retired. I always fitted in well with the general Australian society. The working people treated you the same as the others provided you didn't show off and make a nuisance of yourself. I'm a modest person and I don't show off and that's how I got on best. If you show off you get shown up and it doesn't pay. Always be humble and know less than the others. I always get on well with my fellow workers. Jobs were scarce. You had a job for one week to finish off a block of flats and then there was a stoppage and you had to wait a few weeks, so you had to husband your money. I worked partly for myself and I worked for contractors. There were weeks without work and weeks with work and so you had to go very, very easy.

At night when we had nothing to do we would go to the Kleinsmans. We would buy a bottle of cool drink and talk to them. Eventually the Kleinsmans brought their brother over from Poland. He went east. Well the Kleinsmans had no children you see, and she sort of mothered us. They had a greengrocery shop. It was a lonely life at times and all we had to go to were the pictures. Some of the German migrants finished up in the Eastern States. I didn't feel like it. I existed and struggled through. I never thought I wanted to go. It was never suggested to me but it was to the others. I've a feeling they realised they didn't fit in. They couldn't have survived the Jewish community. The Jewish community at that time was very much anglicised and were frightened of foreigners. We looked different. Our clothes were different. I could tell by looking at the clothes what country they came from. I was in the camps interpreting and working and eventually I saw the light, and thought why work hard when I could have a few weeks off? I thought I would get myself a low paid government job. As a matter of fact I took over Ferdie Feldman's job at the tramways. He was working as an



electrician. Then I found £95 and bought a block of land and bought this house. I got it built well and Bobby Sheldon designed it. He was another refugee and we all stuck together to a certain extent. He was from Austria and I had met him here.

In Mrs Adler's cake shop all the cakes which weren't sold by night time she gave away and the refugees stayed there until the shop was closed. She came from Europe and she remembered! Old Sam and she between them guaranteed more than forty people for permits. Some people found her difficult but I have a soft spot for her. People didn't realise what they did, but when Sam died I wrote a eulogy and mentioned it. The old Adler brothers, between them, were very, very generous. They had a number of brothers over east. Those who were really helpful never broadcast it, and those who did the broadcasting did the least. Some came who were not Jews but, according to Hitler, you had to have four generations clean. If a Jewish man was married to a non-Jewish woman there were problems. A lot of wives divorced their husband and others said they hadn't slept with them. Some sent their husbands to the camps and got rid of them. The more education they had the quicker they got rid of them. It was mainly the professionals.

I left in 1938 and so I had five years under the Nazis. I looked the perfect Aryan - tall and blond. I even had my face slapped once for going with a Jewish girl. The Nazis were always trying to prove that racially, Jews were inferior. We even had our heads measured in school to prove the theory that certain shapes existed only in Jews. They used to say a Catholic hospital and a Jewish doctor is the best medical treatment you can get. After 1938 Jews couldn't go to the theatre or cinemas. They took their driving licences away. I couldn't even do my final exam but later on Jews couldn't even sit for the exams and they lost everything.

My father was pleased to see me go. The general opinion was to get the young people out. Save them. It wasn't a bad policy. The president of the Jewish community, his name was Heinrich Stahl, he was well-to-do and a distant relation, very, very distant. His policy was to get the young people out, save them. He realised that there was no future, but we always lived and believed that nothing would happen to us. We fought during the war. We got medals. We lost more than ten thousand Jews in the 1914-18 war. It's not known here. We had a club: German Citizens of the Jewish religion. My father was on the board of the

Returned Soldiers League - the Jewish Returned Soldiers League. Nobody thought it would come to that, in a highly educated Germany.

The Germans haven't changed much. Give them an inch and they take the lot and given enough rope they'll hang themselves. At the moment they are behaving themselves.

I have been back to Berlin but I never want to live there. I just felt coldness and indifference. Just another city. I went to where I had lived. The synagogue was complete rubble. They hadn't rebuilt that section because our leaders deeded the properties to English friends, English and American universities. So the properties were owned by English and Americans, given to them by the Jewish leaders.

That's why the Jewish community today in Berlin consists of about five thousand people, but very few Germans. Only the old ones. The rest are mainly Poles and Russians, and they sort of inherited all the wealth which was built up over the hundreds of years by the German Jews. They are again rebuilding the *shules*.

If I had remained in Berlin I wouldn't be alive now. There's no doubt about it. Because I couldn't keep my mouth shut. They had a register of everybody who was Jewish. You were called up, directed to go to the transport number so and so. You were sent to Auschwitz officially for resettlement but in reality you went to the gas chambers.

In the end it didn't matter if you were from Germany or Austria or wherever. You all ended up in the camps. I was one of the fortunate ones who left in time.

It was reported in the *Jewish News* from Melbourne, the community in Berlin reopened the Jewish day school in the same building where I went to school.