(Moritz, Eduard) Hermann Nelki (17.01.1863 - 12.01.1941)

Hermann was the eighth child of Jakob Julius & Lina (née Heilbut), born in 1863. This was an Ashkenazi family, from Germany and Poland and not religious. He was 16 when his father left the family to live with a much younger woman and start a new family and the Nelki/y Family Circus: https://www.julianelki.com/archive-circus-nelkis. He very much missed his father but determined to become a university educated dental surgeon unlike anyone else in his family. He worked as a dentist i(which did not require a university degree) in Potsdamer Strasse at the same time as studying in the university in Berlin although students weren't really allowed to work. He completed the first part of the dental training in 1883 and continued working as a dentist to fund his studies to study further. In 1892, he enrolled in the philosophy dept in Halle (the medical department wouldn't take dental students at that time) and became a qualified dental surgeon in 1894. He had reached a higher status than the Nelkis before him. No longer did it seem necessary to practice dentistry by roving from place to place or advertising.

When he married Ernestine in 1894, she moved into his home in Potsdamer Str. 43 and they had their first five children there. By 1900, they needed a bigger place to live and moved to Schönwalder Str. 111, Spandau with enough room for a growing family, a dental practice and a laboratory.

Hermann became interested in politics and an 'elector' for the national-liberal party. He and Ernestine got involved with the Society for the Protection of Children.

Their comfortable life and time in Spandau came to a sudden end when in 1910 a big sign was posted there (in 1910!) saying 'do not go to Jewish dental surgeon Nelki'.

They moved to Wartburgstr. in Schöneberg where Wolf, the youngest child was born.

Then in about 1914 they moved to Friedrichshagen as many of the family were in the army and working in Fürstenwalde, which was closer to Friedrichshagen than where they lived before, although the journey turned out to take as long.

At the end of WW1, they moved in 1917 to Augsburger Str. 25 in Charlottenburg in Berlin – a flat with seven rooms and a front and back entrance. The best room with parquet flooring was chosen as the surgery. The so-called maid's room was equipped as a dental laboratory. Gas pipes were laid to feed several Bunsen burners and the family helped equip the surgery. The whole family moved back to live together here at the end of WW1 and they bought another flat in that block to accommodate them all and their surgeries.

Hermann finally was able to complete his doctorate in 1921 in dentistry at the University of Königsberg, at the age of 59.

It was hard to get patients at that time and they bought and sold practices in different places although Augsburger Straße was their main base and had the name plates of Fritz, Otto & Hermann on the door (even though Hermann practiced elsewhere).

Many parties were held at this house, especially at Christmas and on 23 January which was Alice's birthday. They had a wide social life and many friends, both Jewish and not Jewish. Hermann's 70th birthday was on Jan 17, 1933, and mentioned in the papers, saying what an excellent dental surgeon he was.

However, this was the last time they had security and comfort. The appointment of Hitler as chancellor in January 1933 changed everything and although they wanted to stay, on March 31st, the day before the boycott, he, Ernestine and Henry left Berlin to go to Brussels, 'for two weeks' said Hermann. They had never travelled outside Germany but never returned. With the help of a relative in Brussels they moved to a small furnished flat and were supported financially by Fritz who sent them money from London.

Eventually, they joined their sons in London and lived with Otto in Clapham. Hermann made sure the family gathered together at Christmas and birthdays and kept the family together and supporting each other until he died on 12 January 1941. He is buried with Ernestine in the Orthodox Jewish cemetery in Willesden, 17 Unity Cl, London NW10 2HR, London.

Text: Julia Nelki