



Vera Kielsky-Greenwood

Mrs. Greenwood's family had lived in Germany for 1000 years. Six of her uncles served in WWI, two receiving iron crosses, and one giving his life for his country. Her father, Arnold Landshut, was a successful criminal lawyer until Hitler's laws came into effect. A Jew could no longer work for a non-Jew, and so anyone in need of criminal representation could not hire him. The stress of the new laws and national attitude took its toll beyond finances. Mrs. Greenwood's mother had a miscarriage late in her pregnancy.

When she was just five years old, Mrs. Greenwood remembers watching what looked like a wonderful parade marching by right outside their living room window. Her mother quickly pulled her away, not wishing to expose her daughter to the sight of crowds cheering as Nazi soldiers marched smartly in step with right hands held high in praise of Hitler and the Third Reich.

Still in the early days of the Third Reich's reign, six soldiers appeared at the family's door, pushing their way into the apartment. They found the well-appointed library and threw the whole collection out into the street. Every book was confiscated. It was summer of 1933.

That was enough for Mr. Landshut who, the next day, applied for visas from the British consulate to Palestine. He paid £1000 so the three could leave Germany as soon as possible. At the train station, Mrs. Greenwood remembers all the extended family coming to say goodbye. Half of them said, "You're crazy! This madness will soon pass. This is Germany." The other half said, "Good luck. We wish we could go with you."

Two of Mr. Landshut's 9 siblings were in Palestine already, and as an avid Zionist, he was happy to join them. But Palestine was a harsh place, and life there for their young, slightly spoiled cosmopolitan family meant very real and not always pleasant lifestyle changes.

First they moved to Haifa where Mr. Landshut's brother had procured a tiny apartment for them. One brother, with his wife and children, moved next door. The Landshut's opened the first Jewish delicatessen in Palestine. This required that they all learn Hebrew. Though her mother was a good cook, Arnold didn't have the temperament to serve at the counter. He often had customers waiting much too long while he measured out sliced meats to order, determined he would not go an ounce over or under what was requested. As a result, business suffered.

When young Vera began to suffer constant ear infections, their doctor recommended moving to the dryer climate of Jerusalem. Given that the deli business clearly wasn't Arnold's true calling, they decided to move and Mr. Landshut went into business selling office supplies. Unfortunately, his business partner defrauded him and left Arnold destitute. After so much upheaval and hard work, he had found himself left with nothing in a land he

still was not familiar with and no way to support his family. In this exhausted and depressed state, Mr. Landshut actually brought poison home for the three of them to take. Vera's mother convinced Arnold that things were not at all that desperate, and the next day she secured a job as a cook in a restaurant. Her salary was extremely modest, but included one hot meal a day for the three of them, so at least Mrs. Landshut had been able to save her family from starvation.

In an astonishing turn around, Arnold not only pulled himself out of his depression but studied English (on top of having learned Hebrew) as well as the British laws so that he could pass the British law exams. After six years of working during the day selling cheese wholesale and studying at night, Mr. Landshut earned his Juris Doctorate degree. Soon after, he was hired by the British government as legal advisor to the head of price control and food rationing for Palestine.

Mrs. Landshut found a job as a secretary. However, her boss was a German businessman who eventually was imprisoned for simply being German in a state controlled by the British during a time of war. Mrs. Landshut was then hired to continue her work in Tel Aviv, and because the family relied on her income as well as her husband's, she had no choice but to move away from her family. She would visit them on weekends for two years, until 1942.

During her time in Tel Aviv, the Germans bombed the city. Mrs. Greenwood remembers praying to G-d for her mother's safety, promising not to go to the movies for a year if her survived. Her mother lived, and Mrs. Greenwood kept her promise.

One day, Mrs. Greenwood looked through her father's belongings which she was not supposed to do and found some photographs under an assortment of paperwork on his desk. The photographs were of her father in a military uniform, training as a Haganah soldier. "Well," she thought, "if he can keep secrets, so can I." At the age of 16, Mrs. Greenwood managed to work her way into the underground forces, herself, to join the fight against the British. One of her main jobs was to keep watch on a British military camp that happened to be within perfect view from a window of an Orthodox family who cooperated with the underground. She had to record every movement, even when the soldiers went to the bathroom or to take a smoking break.

After the war, but before Israel came into being, started the Hebrew University. The Arabs were now hostile in response to the Zionists who wanted to form the State of Israel. The Arab siege of Jerusalem closed all roads leading out of the city, including the one to the university. It was dangerous to attempt any travel, and Mrs. Greenwood recalls the tragedy of a busload of 72 doctors and nurses who were murdered by the Arabs as they tried to get to Hadassah Hospital.

In 1948 Vera was 19 years old, and she became a full-time soldier. She served the Israeli army almost two years. It was a rough life being on the front lines, having no way to warm food and being given ½ gallon of water every other day for all purposes—drinking, washing, laundry and toilet.

After her service, Mrs. Greenwood finally attended university, earning a Master's degree in sociology, economics, and statistics. She went to work as a statistician for the newly formed government's Bureau of Statistics.

Mrs. Greenwood had met her husband, Joseph Kielsky, in Israel where he was principal of a boarding school near Be'er Sheva. The couple had two sons and a daughter. Having a master's degree, she wanted to pursue her studies for a PhD and was offered help by the German government to move to Germany and study at Frankfurt University. However, after beginning her studies, she decided that she didn't want to spend so much time away from her children which her studies would require. So, the family remained in Germany, but Vera became a teacher in English, math, and social science in a kind of high school/trade school.

After 14 years in Germany, with hard work and no social life because the people were too aloof and cold, an opportunity arose for a change. Vera was selected as an exchange teacher to the U.K. She took her children with her, but not her husband. He was forced to commute in order to see his family. The family spent a year in the U.K., and the children adapted well. Still, her eldest son, Amnon, preferred Israel and returned to his native country after 3 years in Germany. Eventually Amnon would join the Israeli navy as a seal, and many years later his own son would also become an Israeli navy seal.

In 1978, Mrs. Greenwood applied and was selected to go to Phoenix on a Fulbright International Teacher's Exchange. She then attended ASU for a Ph.D. in English Language and Literature.

Her husband joined her in the U.S. and was able to quickly find work as an evaluator of foreign documents accredited by the U.S. government. Having lived in many places during WWII, he spoke 9 languages and became an expert in identifying documents, determining if they were real or fake.

Mr. Kielsky was a chronic smoker, and he developed lung cancer and died in January 1993. As members of Beth El, the couple had made many friends among the shul's members. After Mr. Kielsky's death, a friend in the congregation offered to take Mrs. Greenwood on a trip to Laughlin. It turned out that this lady friend was going to be accompanied by another gentleman friend, although the relationship was purely platonic.

On the way back from Laughlin, Mrs. Greenwood sat in the front seat and began conversing with Mr. Greenwood. The conversation quickly became astounding. The two had an incredible amount of things in common:

- Both had recently been widowed
- Each had been married for nearly 40 years
- Both had visited Jerusalem at the same time that summer
- Each spouse was born in the same year and died of cancer within 5 days of one another
- Each had two boys and one girl
- Each had their eldest boy living in Jerusalem, and each son had 3 boys and 1 daughter
- Each had a son living in Chandler off the same street, and both of them had 1 girl and 1 boy 1 year apart in age
- Each had a daughter married to a non-Jew by the name of John and had no children

After a few months, Mr. Greenwood's daughter suggested that on New Year's Eve, he invite several other widows and widowers to his home. Among the group was Mrs. Greenwood. When Mr. Greenwood was invited to Vera's home, he noticed that they had the same pattern dishes and flatware.

It seemed inevitable that these two people would end up married. They had 120 people attend their wedding, and of those, about 110 already knew each other. They shared so many things in

common even though they'd never met, that nearly all their friends turned out to be mutual to them both.

One person did recognize what a great couple they would make. That was Temple Beth El's Rabbi Silberman. He had suggested Mr. Greenwood call "this lady I know you'd like" about 6 months before they met. Mr. Greenwood said that he simply forgot the number the rabbi had given him and really didn't give it serious thought because he didn't think the Rabbi could know how much they would have in common or be sure that they'd get along. Luckily for Mr. Greenwood, the Rabbi was right after all.