



Fred Greenwood Z"L

Mr. Greenwood was born in Eindhoven, in Holland. The town is in southern Holland, the country, as he describes it, being divided by 3 major rivers. In the 1600's, he says, the Netherlands was like America is today, a world power taking in refugees from all parts of the globe, and this is how his ancestors came to live there, having left Germany in the early 19th century.

Mr. Greenwood explains that the land to the north is known to be more cosmopolitan and its citizens well-educated. His father was from the south, while his mother was raised in the north. Her family traded in diamonds, and she was an accomplished pianist, giving lessons, accompanying opera singers, and playing in cinemas to add background music as silent movies played on screen. Because of his mother's love of music, Mr. Greenwood said that there was always music playing in his home, either live or on the radio. His mother's brother played the flute with the great Italian conductor, Arturo Toscanini.

Mr. Greenwood's father was a Veehandelaar, the middle man who bought the cow from the rancher and sold meat to the butcher. Mr. Greenwood enjoyed accompanying his father on his job, riding on the back of his father's bicycle. Young Freddy could count on being treated to fresh cold cuts from the butchers they visited.

Early in 1940, Mr. Greenwood remembers listening to the radio and hearing Hitler give a speech to a German crowd. His family didn't speak German, but knew the word, "Juden," and understood they were hearing a well-received hate-speech against Jews. On May 10th that same year, when he was 10 years old, his brother Jacques was 12 and his brother Hans was 15, Hitler invaded Holland. Within five days, the entire Dutch government was replaced by Germans.

A few days later, the reality of the Nazis was made clear to Mr. Greenwood when Nazi troops marched down his street, and he could see the parade from his living room window. The troops were led by a motorcade of long cars and motorcycles, the soldiers marching behind in lockstep. He remembers the frightening metallic sound of their heavy footsteps; Nazi troops had metal heels on their boots which added to the longevity of the boots and also the intimidating stature of the soldiers.

Although Eindhoven was the 5th largest industrial city in Holland, there were only 700 Jewish people living there, and many of them were related. Consequently, young Freddy thought that "everybody was family." Yet, that feeling changed overnight. After the German invasion, he remembers staying at an "aunts" house (one of many relatives he referred to as such), but feeling strange during the walk home. "For the first time in my life, I felt self-conscious," Mr. Greenwood remembers. "Something had changed, but I wasn't sure what."

Still, his mother was determined that her family would carry on with their lives regardless of the madness that seemed to be taking hold of their country. Even her determination, however, was no match for the restrictions that came with the occupation. Jews were not allowed in parks, in public swimming pools; they were not allowed to use cars or bicycles; they could not hold certain professions, and they could not socialize with non-Jews.

In 1941, it was decreed that Dutch Jews would have to wear the Yellow Star identifying them as Jewish. In the middle of the Star was the word, "Jood." From a moral standpoint, this was the ultimate humiliation. However, Mr. Greenwood pointed out that it was also a practical nightmare. Each family was given only a few of the stars, but was forced to sew it to any article of clothing worn outside of the home. This meant that his mother had to constantly take off the star and re-sew them to the clothing of each family member every time they changed clothes.

Among the restrictions was the law that no Jewish children could attend school with non-Jews. This meant that Freddy and his brothers had to take the train to a Jewish school 30 miles away. The most traumatizing aspect of this was that as time passed, they noticed that more and more children disappeared. Without a goodbye or mention of plans to leave, the children simply vanished, leaving Freddy and his brothers to wonder what could have happened to them.

The "final solution" was contrived by Hitler and his top men at the Wannsee Conference in January 1942. Within several months, "Uncle Michael" came to tell each member of the Groenewoudt family to pack a suitcase and be ready to leave at a moment's notice.

Uncle Michael was not Jewish—he was Catholic— but was among the close friends that the Groenewoudt's considered family. Uncle Michael had nine children, some of whom had been instructed in piano by Mrs. Groenewoudt. Certainly, he had much to lose if the Germans ever learned about his underground activity, but this extraordinary man chose not to let fear inhibit his morality. Uncle Michael showed up one evening and took Freddy to his "first address."

They left in the middle of the night on bicycle. Uncle Michael was a big man, and had one stiff leg that was of little use. Still, he could pedal faster on his bicycle than most fit men with two good legs.

His only advice to Freddy as he led him to his new home was to "be obedient." For this 12-year-old boy living in hiding, this meant that he was not to complain, do as he was told, and above all, not to make a sound.

Over the next two years, Uncle Michael would show up every few weeks to escort Freddy to a new hiding place or "address." His feeling was that it was unsafe to keep Freddy in the same home too long because sooner or later the milkman would notice the regular consumption of an extra bottle of milk, or the neighbors would wonder why they were no longer invited to visit. It was a wise strategy, but not without many risks. It was remarkable that Uncle Michael could find 14 different families to hide Freddy, and that he managed to smuggle the young boy without notice was a death-defying feat.

With each "new address," Freddy was given an escape route so that he could be ready to flee if there was any sign of Nazi soldiers coming to the home. Luckily, he never had to use the emergency escape, although he did have one or two close calls with soldiers.

On one ride to his next home, Mr. Greenwood recalls that they ran into a German soldier, also on a bicycle. Michael didn't panic and simply carried on a short conversation as though traveling in the middle of the night with a suitcase and young boy on bicycle was the most natural thing in the world.

The Groenewoudt family owed much to those brave people who risked their own lives and their families' lives to save people they didn't even know. Freddy's mother was lucky enough to be taken to "Den Haag" and stayed with a family including an opera singer. Michael had procured fake papers for her and so she could live openly with the family.

Mr. Greenwood's oldest brother, Hans, had been working as a chemist in a factory owned by a family named Phillips, but he was not allowed to stay. Hans had visited Freddy once while in hiding, but then disappeared and Mr. Greenwood has no idea what happened to him. However, he suspects that Hans died on a specific night. That night, Freddy had a dream that he saw his brother on a bridge but he couldn't move and go meet him. Mr. Greenwood reports that the dream is still so vivid in his head, and was so vivid then, that it woke him from his sleep and kept him awake throughout the night. His second oldest brother, Jacques, went to work on a farm and then went

into the underground political resistance, not to be confused with the military resistance.

Freddy's only communication with his mother was through Uncle Michael, who relayed messages back and forth as often as possible. Many others helped young Freddy through this terrible time of underground confinement. One teacher continued to send him homework, correcting and grading his work, so that after the war, he had only lost one year of schooling. Even with his homework, however, Mr. Greenwood reports that the toughest part of his hiding was fighting the boredom. He could not make a sound, move in front of a window, or leave his room—not an easy way for anyone to pass hour after hour, day after day for two years, let alone an adolescent boy.

In August 1944, Mr. Greenwood remembers that he could hear the Allies attacking the Germans on the Belgian border 20 miles away. A few weeks later, on September 14th, the allies came through Eindhoven, where he was staying, and he was told he could actually wear shoes and go outside. Freddy found it exciting to be outside and see the allied armies, paratroopers and planes all from the highway as he walked.

Although his side of the rivers was liberated, his mother's side was not free until 1945. So, it wasn't until he was 15 that he could finally see his mother after three years of hiding and waiting for the war to end.

Freddy, his mother and Jacques moved into a garage that was a teacher's art studio where their only furnishings were a sink and table. He and his mother visited their old house where all their belongings were being used by another family. Afraid to make a fuss, his mother left with only a couple of her things, those items that the new owners said they could do without. Later, the Dutch government supplied them with low-rent housing.

His mother began to give piano lessons once again and she went to the head of the Phillips family who owned the factory where Hans had worked. Mr. Phillips agreed to pay for Freddy's tuition in the "gymnasium," a university preparatory school. There Freddy did well, but could never overcome that feeling of insecurity that haunted him just after war broke out, a feeling he had never experienced before the war, when he was surrounded by friends and family. Now anyone he knew who was Jewish was gone, and he felt vulnerable.

In 1952, after finding no real job or career that interested him, Freddy received the permanent visa he needed to move to America. He had applied after a visit to his uncle in New York. Upon entering the New York harbor on ship, he remembers being so joyous, that he waved to the Statue of Liberty as he sailed by. As soon as he settled in the U.S., Mr. Greenwood discovered he needed to register for the draft. Within 4 months, he was in basic training as an American soldier of the Korean War.

On his way to Korea in Fort Lewis, he found the drudgery of military service was taking its toll. One day after roll-call, Freddy and a friend decided to part ways with their unit and go left instead of right. They continued down their path towards the compound library, thinking they would pass the time with some good books. As they approached the door, a colonel opened it and asked, "Are you the guys sent to help?" "Absolutely!" they replied, and thereafter happily continued to show up daily for easy work in the library, having their meals with the officers, all the while astonished at their good fortune.

Freddy's good luck continued in the army. He began taking photos as a hobby and ended up being a kind of unofficial base photographer. One of his subjects was the lovely young actress, Marilyn Monroe whom he photographed when she was on base entertaining troops.

In that one year, from 1953-54, at the age of 22-23, Freddy got married to Anita Amsel and soon after had a baby on the way, traveled as part of the engineering corps to Japan and Korea, and then still with the army, came back to the U.S. In 1954, when the war ended, he returned to join his uncle in the diamond cutting business. Like previous jobs, Freddy found diamond cutting uninteresting and an unsatisfactory way to spend his life.

One day as Anita was having her hair done, her stylist asked her if her husband would like to become a stylist himself. He thought it sounded like a fine idea, so he went to beautician school on the G.I. bill, and began his new career. It was a rough start. The first few jobs ended with his being fired for dropping shampoo bottles, inability to use hairpins properly, and an "atrocious" hair cut or two. But after many false starts, he developed knowledge of permanents, tints, and problem solving—fixing mistakes made by other stylists.

In 1960, he opened his own shop in Queens, NY. He and Anita had three children, and the family lived comfortably and happily on the east coast.

Yet, when they came for a vacation to visit Phoenix and Scottsdale, the family liked the area so much, they relocated to the Valley of the Sun in 1966. Mr. Greenwood eventually opened two highly successful shops in the valley and was able to sell his business and retire at the age of 56.

The Greenwoods enjoyed a long happy marriage and had three children. Their oldest son, Mark (now Naftali) lives in Israel where he has 4 children. Their younger son, Robert, lived in Chandler, married with two children, and their daughter, Rochelle in California. When, in 1993, Mrs. Greenwood tragically died of cancer, Mr. Greenwood found himself living alone for the first time in many years.

It seemed everyone he knew was trying to fix him up, and even his Rabbi gave him the number of someone he thought would make a great match for Mr. Greenwood. Eventually, he lost the number of Vera Kielsky, and forgot about calling her, never really having given it much thought in the first place.

A few months later, a good friend invited him to join her and another friend on a trip to Laughlin. That new friend turned out to be the same Vera whose number he had lost. On the drive back, she sat in the front seat part of the drive 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 in Jerusalem at the same time
- Each spouse was born in the same year and died 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, and both of them had 1 girl and 1 boy 1 year apart in age

Later that year, 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 Vera. The next time Fred visited Vera at her house, he noticed that her dishes and flatware had the same pattern as his own.

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.

Today, Fred and Vera Greenwood make a charming and elegant couple. They both have remarkable life stories and significant tales to tell that reflect how WWII affected lives not just during the war years, but forever after.