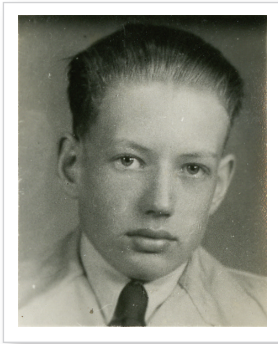


Fred Marcus [Fritz Werner Marcus]

BERLÍN, ALEMANIA - 1924



Fred Marcus was born on May 16, 1924 in Berlin, Germany. His parents, Samuel “Semmy” Marcus and Gertrud Marcus (née Kowalewski), gave him the name Fritz Werner, which he later changed to Fred. The Marcus family had lived in Prussia for over 200 years and Semmy was proud of his German roots. During World War I, he served in Germany’s military and was awarded the Iron Cross. The Marcuses lived in a comfortable apartment near the city center and spent summers on the Baltic coast. Although Semmy came from an orthodox family, he was not particularly observant and Jewish traditions did not play a prominent role in Fred’s childhood home.

When Hitler came to power in 1933, Fred was 9 years old. That year he started fifth grade at a large German school, where he was subjected to the taunts of his teachers and classmates. Anti-Semitism permeated all aspects of life in Germany under the Nazis. Jewish participation in economic and social life was restricted, and Jewish businesses were forced to close. Many German Jews sought to emigrate, even as it became more difficult to obtain visas to escape.

Fred’s mother suffered from a prolonged illness, and due to her poor health, the Marcus family did not leave Germany until after her death in 1938. By that time, options were few, but Semmy and Fred obtained one-way berths to Shanghai, a port that did not require visas. They departed on March 29, 1939, embarking on a month-long voyage through exotic ports on the way to Shanghai. For the 14-year old Fred, it was a great adventure.

Once in Shanghai, Semmy and Fred adjusted to a new way of life: the life of refugees living in diminished circumstances. They moved into a shelter and sold off valuables in order to make ends meet. Bustling Shanghai was home to an international community, and some 20,000 European refugees had arrived in the city prior to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor (December 1941). Afterwards, Japanese troops occupied Shanghai, bringing the war to those who had sought to escape it. In early 1943, the Japanese ordered all “stateless refugees,” who were overwhelmingly Jewish, to move into a Designated Area in Hongkew where their access to work, food, sanitation and medical care was severely restricted.

Poor diet and harsh conditions caused their health to deteriorate, and in 1944 both Fred and Semmy were ill. Fred contracted pneumonia and fought a high fever for over a week. He recovered only to find that his father had passed away during his illness. Now alone and with no income, 19-year-old Fred had to fend for himself. He joined a fire brigade and later served as a member of the local police force. These jobs helped to keep him afloat financially and earned benefits such as extra meal rations, and also provided structure to his life.

During these dark days, Fred maintained a close friendship with a family of displaced Berliners, the Alexanders, and through them developed a deeper connection to Jewish tradition. Their son, Ted (Theo) Alexander, and Fred had been friends in Berlin and remained close throughout their lives.

The refugees in Shanghai followed the war in Europe through the Russian radio broadcasts, noting the Russian and Allied armies’ advances against Germany. Fred celebrated Allied victory in Europe

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in May 1945, but the war against Japan continued through the summer. With the end of the war on August 10, Fred threw himself into the excitement of post-war Shanghai. He found work at the Cathay Hotel, which housed high-ranking American military officials. There he met influential Americans and soon adopted the name Fred. The U.S. was the preferred destination for most Jewish refugees, although America's immigration quota system made it difficult to obtain a visa. After watching many of his friends leave Shanghai, Fred was finally approved to enter the U.S. and sailed for San Francisco in February 1949.

In San Francisco, Fred found work in the hotel industry before becoming a teacher and a synagogue administrator. He dedicated his life to Jewish education and spoke frequently to audiences about his experiences growing up in Nazi Germany and as a refugee in Shanghai. In 1980, he was named President of the National Association of Temple Educators. He had two children from a first marriage to Lucille Rosenbloom.

In 1974, Fred married Audrey Friedman Marcus. He was a devoted father to Audrey's three children and to his own. Fred and Audrey moved to Denver in 1981. After retiring, they traveled to 103 countries and led group tours to Germany and Shanghai. Fred Marcus suffered a fatal heart attack during a trip to Germany in 2002. He is survived by five children and ten grandchildren. In 2003, the Fred Marcus Memorial Holocaust Lecture was inaugurated by the Holocaust Awareness Institute at the University of Denver's Center for Judaic Studies. Fred was a member of the Institute's Survivor Speakers Bureau for years. The annual lecture in Fred's memory presents innovative research in Holocaust studies to promote education.

Fred Marcus [Fritz Werner Marcus]

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