**Fred Weiss – His Story**

FRIEDRICH (Fridyes in Hungarian) LOTHAR WEISS, better known as Fred Weiss, was born in Miskolc in Hungary on May 23rd 1921.  He lived most of his adult life in Glasgow, Scotland and epitomised the ideal of how a poor young refugee could make good by hard work and strong will.

His mother, Irma Eisner, was born on 16th June 1883 in Brno, when it was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.  It later became part of Czechoslovakia, and is now part of the Czech Republic.  Her parents were Joseph and Maria Eisner.  It is not known when she married Hermann Weiss or moved to Hungary- country boundaries at that time were very different from the current ones.  Frau Weiss was a cook by profession and in later years ran the Jewish soup kitchen in Vienna.  It is believed that the rest of her family was lost in the Holocaust with the possible exception of an uncle who survived and moved to Argentina.

Friedrich’s father, Hermann, died when he was young.  He had fought in the First World War in the Austro-Hungarian army, which was allied to the German side, but it is not known whether this was a factor in his early death.  Friedrich’s father (as recorded on his birth certificate) was a tobacco merchant.  Hence smoking may have been a contributory factory to his early death.

Friedrich was brought up by his mother, Frau Weiss.  On 22nd July 1935 she married Artur Braun and afterwards was known as Frau Braun, although it is widely believed by the family that this was an arranged marriage in order that she could remain in Vienna (Wien), to where she appears to have moved before 1927.  The marriage was under the Israelitischen Kultusgemeinde (which we understand as Jewish Law and Custom).  No more is known of Artur Braun and he took no further part in Friedrich’s life.

Frau Braun and Friedrich lived at Reuppgasze 32, 3/15, Wien 2, and Friedrich’s existing school reports for the years 1927/28, 1934/35, 1936/37, and 1937/38 indicate that he was good or very good in the main school subjects.  They also indicate that he was a stateless child although acknowledging that he was born in Miskolc, Hungary.

As the threat to Jews under the Third Reich grew, Frau Braun was able to arrange, through one of the refugee schemes, for Friedrich to be sponsored to come to the United Kingdom.  His sponsors were the Ferrar family who at that time lived at 30 Hathaway Drive, Giffnock, Glasgow.

Friedrich was issued with a German passport in Vienna as a stateless citizen on 29th December 1938 with an expiry date one year later.  He was described as a ‘Tischler’, which we take to mean ‘carpenter or joiner’.  Within a month, Friedrich obtained his visa for the United Kingdom (dated 23rd January 1939) granting him entrance to the UK within 90 days of the date stamped, and he was en route to Britain.

He travelled as one of the ‘adult’ leaders on one of the Kindertransports, first to Switzerland then to The Netherlands before crossing to the UK.  His German passport was stamped by Immigration at Harwich on 31st January 1939.  It was also stamped on 3rd March 1939 by the City of Glasgow Police Aliens Registration Department with the note that he had “leave to land granted at Harwich this day on condition that the holder will emigrate from the United Kingdom on completion of his training.”  His initial address when he arrived in Glasgow was at 2 Millbrae Crescent, Queen’s Park, Glasgow.

His mother followed him, obtaining a German Reisspass on 2nd March 1939, and a visa for the UK on 25th April 1939, on the condition that she would not take up any employment or engage in any business, profession or occupation in the United Kingdom.  There is a final German stamp on her passport, dated 1st May 1939, which was probably at point of departure, and then a stamp of the Chief Constable of Renfrewshire indicating that she was issued with Registration Certificate No 681905 on 11th May 1939.

This registration document indicates that Mrs. Braun, as she would be known in the UK, arrived on 1st May 1939, and resided c/o Ferrar, 30 Hathaway Drive, Giffnock.  On 29th November that year, it is endorsed that she is a refugee from Nazi oppression and is exempt from internment.  There are further endorsements on this document indicating that she moved to a number of temporary addresses:

* on 5th December 1939, to 48 Abbotsford Place (in the Gorbals)
* on 25th November 1940, to Balkind, 17 Devon Street
* on 11th July 1941, a temporary visit to Murdoch, 28 Lochbroom Drive Newton Mearns, then on 30th August back to Devon Street[[1]](https://gatheringthevoices.com/fred-weiss-his-story/%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn1)
* on 2nd March 1942, to Winestone, 43 Annette Street
* on 17th November 1943, to Mason, 706 Shettleston Road
* on 30th May 1945, c/o Goodman, 330 Cathcart Road, from where Friedrich would be married
* on 9th July 1947, to 4 Hazelden Gardens, Muirend, the first home of Friedrich (now Fred) and his new wife Beatrice Rose Weiss (nee Links).

The need for Mrs. Braun to report for registration lasted until 25th January 1961, when the document is endorsed to the effect that no further registration was required under the Aliens Order 1960.

Mrs. Braun’s identity card dated 13th October 1943 confirms the addresses of Shettleston Road, Cathcart Road and Hazelden Gardens.

Fred married Beatrice Links, daughter of Nathan and Betsy Links on 12th June 1947 in the Tudor Ballroom, Giffnock, and they moved into Hazelden Gardens.  They celebrated their honeymoon in London staying at the Cumberland Hotel near Marble Arch.  A year later, on 18th November 1948, Fred received his naturalisation papers as a British Citizen from the Home Office.

It is believed that Fred’s father-in-law, Nathan Links, was at first not too enamoured with the idea of his daughter marrying a young refugee without capital.  Fred, however, won him over, and at the same time supplemented his income in the early days of his married life, by collecting money on behalf of Nathan, who was a credit-draper and money-lender.  Some of the areas Fred had to cover, including parts of Govan, were quite rough and dangerous, and Fred always had a hammer from his work tool-box with him ‘just in case’ though as far as is known, he never had to use it.

Fred, who lived with his mother at the various addresses above until he was married, started work with Crestol Bedding shortly after arriving in Glasgow.  Crestol was a bedding manufacturer owned and run by the Caplan family.  Starting as a junior employee, he was able to learn the various stages of the production process as his colleagues were called up for the armed forces, and by the end of the war, he held the position of manager within the factory.  We have notes of his salary for the years 1948 to 1951, reflecting his increasing responsibility.  It was about this time that Fred was offered the opportunity to buy a 49% share in the Crestol family business – a major shareholding, but without control, which was to be be retained by the Caplan family.

Fred felt that if he was good enough to have a major shareholding, he was good enough to run the company – and if not that company he would start one himself.  After a couple of years gaining more experience at another bedding company, Fred started working for himself, taking over the premises of yet another bedding company which had gone into liquidation, Hugh Haughan Ltd, situated in Eglinton Street, near the Gorbals. He obtained the initial capital required from the bank on the guarantee of one of Beatrice’s cousins, H.B.Livingston, but within a short period, he was able to pay off the advance

Initially, Fred made mattresses by day, interspersed with visits to local retailers to sell them, and delivered after 4pm in his estate car.

Eventually, he started to employ staff, starting with former colleagues from his previous employers, including John Neil (a mattress maker and driver) and Margaret Wood (a seamstress), who would work with him until they retired in the 1980s.  His wife Beatrice also worked alongside him, running the office and helping in the factory.  As the business developed they moved to larger premises at 121 Moffat Street, off Ballater Street, in the Gorbals.  The business is still located in Moffat Street at time of writing in 2014.

They had three daughters.  The eldest Myra Evelyn was born on 16th June 1948, which was also her grandmother Irma Braun’s 65th birthday.  Their middle daughter, Eleanor Alice, was born on 19th January 1953, and their youngest Betsy Joanne on 1st December 1958. With Beatrice working, the children were looked after by their grandmother, Mrs. Braun, who prepared family meals.  As the business developed, and more staff were employed by the factory, Beatrice was able to take more time off to look after the family, and worked only within school hours.

The business, renamed Elite Bedding Company Limited, flourished in Moffat St through Fred’s hard work and business instincts (despite his having had no formal business training).  He developed good contacts in the contract furniture market supplying contract and domestic furniture to, among others, Strathclyde University as it developed new halls of residence, Glasgow City Council’s children’s homes, and a significant number of hotels, hospitals, and Bed & Breakfast establishments.  Elite became the main supplier of beds to the expanding Reo Stakis Organisation’s hotels.

Fred’s prolific success and growing reputation in the industry soon led to the affectionate moniker of “Fred The Bed” amongst his friends, colleagues and customers.

In time the move into furniture lead to the opening of a wholesale and retail domestic furniture business.  On reaching his fifties, having worked hard all his life, Fred felt the need to be less pressurised, and invited Eleanor’s husband, Harvey Livingston, a young chartered accountant, to join as his assistant.  A few years later, another son-in-law, Betsy’s husband, Gary Winston also joined the company.  Both Eleanor and Betsy also joined the staff becoming Company Directors, and working within the offices and showrooms.

Fred and Beatrice moved from Hazelden Gardens in Muirend to Lochbroom Drive in Newton Mearns in the 1960s.  After their two elder daughters were married, they purchased their final Glasgow home in the upmarket, and at that time exclusive, Barcapel flats, off Capelrig Road, Newton Mearns, where they were amongst the earliest residents.

Fred’s great ambition was to be successful enough to drive a Rolls Royce.  He started with a much smaller car, an Austin A40, and, over the years, increased the size and power of his vehicles.  He achieved his ambition of owning and driving his own Rolls Royce with a personal registration number of FW 12 in the early 1970s, even giving up cigarettes (he had been a heavy smoker until then) to ensure the car never retained a foul stale smell or a covering of cigarette ash.  During his business lifetime, he was able to replace his Rolls Royce with another -although the second vehicle had mechanical problems, embarrassingly breaking down in Shawlands on one occasion.  Fred gave up his Rolls Royce and switched to driving an Audi.

His other great ambition was to travel and see the world.  Fred and Beatrice were able to do this over the years, returning to Vienna, visiting Italy and the south of France on many occasions, and even completing a 3 month world cruise in the mid 1970s.  Their last trip together was back to Hungary to attend a family function of a friend from Switzerland whom they had met in their travels.

Outside of work, Fred’s main interest was playing bridge.  With Beatrice as his partner, he competed in both local and national events in which they won numerous tournaments and silverware.

Fred was a major philanthropist particularly within the Jewish Community, supporting a number of care and religious charities.  When asked to assist by donating to the annual bazaar of the Jewish Lads and Girls Brigade, he negotiated with several of his suppliers (including the Ferrar family) to obtain free or discounted raw materials.  He then manufactured a number of double divan beds each year, which were auctioned off, producing significant sums for the youth organisation with which several of his family members were associated.  He was appointed Honorary President of the Glasgow Jewish Lads’ and Girls’ Brigade in the late 1980s – a role he held up to his death.

Fred and Beatrice retired in 1986, on his 65th birthday, and settled in Majorca where they continued with their passion for Bridge as well as participating in the activities of the synagogue in Palma.  They had a wide group of friends there from all over Europe and Fred often had the opportunity to converse in his native German (though he never learned more than a few words of Spanish).  Their family visited often, with his grandchildren enjoying trips to their apartment block’s private beach in Costa D’en Blanes (near Portals Nous), to the Marineland Park next door, and the tennis courts just beyond.

Sadly Beatrice passed away in 1995 at the age of 72 (shortly after the Batmitzvah celebrations for their only granddaughter, Karen), and Fred in 2010 at the age of 89.  They were survived by their three daughters and their husbands, 8 grandsons and 1 granddaughter, and 2 great-grandchildren. A further 2 great-grandchildren have been born to date.

From shortly after Beatrice’s death until his own, Fred had the constant companionship of Mrs Edna Levinson, both in Majorca and in Glasgow where he returned permanently in 2006 due to failing health.

The Elite Bedding company business still operates under the management of their daughter Betsy and grandson Gregory Winston, and is still a major player in the contract furniture and bedding market in Scotland.

Fred’s example, as a major charitable giver, conscientious worker and communal figure, serves as an example of how a young refugee, given the opportunities and driven by ambition, can succeed in the world, leading a worthwhile life, and leaving a meaningful legacy for his family and the greater community to recognise and emulate.

***(Written by Harvey Livingston in 2014 from papers discovered in a tin box in Fred and Beatrice’s home after his death, and from recollections of their children and grandchildren)***

(1) This visit could have impressed Fred, but was probably just one of life’s coincidences, as in the 1960’s he and Beatrice moved to an address in the same Lochbroom Drive, at number 25. The original stay may have been at the home of a family who provided respite for refugee families as the Scottish Jewish Archives are aware that other refugees have also stayed there for short periods.