

Freddy Schumer

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Summary

Freddy Schumer was born Siegfried Schumer on January 11, 1929 in Leipzig, Germany to Baruch (changed later to Bruno) and Sala Schumer. Freddy's father had a suspender and belt factory in Leipzig and was the Gabai (director of religious services) in his synagogue. Sometimes he traveled to South Africa and through Europe to sell his merchandise. The family was observant. They left Germany in March 1933 and opened another factory in Amsterdam where Freddy's younger brother, Jack, was born in May 1933. Freddy's maternal grandparents lived there since 1913. The family lived in an apartment with three bedrooms and had a German maid as his mother worked in their factory. There Freddy attended high school where he studied Dutch, French, English and German. Anne Frank sat behind him. In Germany the family spoke German but when they lived in Holland, they spoke Dutch. Freddy did not experience any antisemitism until the Germans arrived. The war started with bombing May 10, 1940 and soon Holland surrendered. Immediately his father arranged for passage to England but the ship, the Renselaer, struck a mine and the family returned to their apartment. His father was given a German supervisor, their maid had to leave and they had to wear a Jewish star. They could only shop from 6 to 8 PM and had to remain indoors from 8 PM to 6 AM. Smugglers helped them escape to Switzerland in June 1942 as deportations had begun. They were stopped by police outside Brussels and the parents were placed in Saint Giles prison for criminals and the children in detention for POWs so there were no other children there. The Germans took them by train to The Hague. They escaped by indicating they were going to the toilet. Their friend, Andre, in the underground got them false papers. Freddy became Francois Demelon. He and Jack hid in a maternity house and the parents hid in separate apartments. They were there for a year and were hungry and three sisters came with food. Then the boys went to an orphanage in Namur for a year. Their parents lived in separate apartments nearby and survived by selling their valuables. It was safer not to make friends in the orphanage. The orphanage was closed in spring '43 due to bombing. Next the boys were moved to a large school of 6,000 students, the Ecole de Malomme des Friers where they had plenty of food and attended church services. Sometimes Freddy delivered false IDs for the underground as it was not safe for his father to go out. They were liberated in September 1944 by the British. His father worked for the JOINT for a year and organized Friday night services for Jewish servicemen and orphans. After a year his father got into business with a Danish/Jewish partner and got repatriation from Germany and Holland. In 1947 the family went to the US on the SS America. He attended night school in Queens while living in Forest Hills. During the day he worked for his father's business which was shipping nylons to Europe. Freddy tried to enter the service for the Korean War but was labeled 4F as had migraines. He and his brother went to Brazil in 1951 as his parents did not want him to fight in a war and the parents followed three years later. They went into a business of importing chemicals. His parents moved to Switzerland in 1969 and Freddy and his brother would visit them alternate years. Freddy remained in business with his brother until 2008 when he retired. Freddy got married

in 1962 to a woman born in Bolivia of Polish descent. His children attended the Rio Jewish School. His daughter, Carina, born in 1964, left in 1992 due to security reasons and his son, Mariso, married in 1995 and lives in Switzerland.