

A celebration of life

Wolfgang Marc Schatzberger

23 July 1926 – 24 January 2021

15:40pm, Friday 12th February 2021, York Crematorium

a personal goodbye

Humanist
Ceremonies

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Our tribute today will inevitably be constrained by the limitation of time. We will hear words from Rosie, Lesley and the grandchildren, but let's first look at Marc's early life. For this we need to go back to Vienna in the 20s and 30s, a culturally and intellectually vibrant city when the young Wolfgang was the only child of Ida (née Lewinter) and Maximilian Schatzberger. There were piano lessons with his mother, summer holidays at Traunsee and Sundays with the Zaslowskis with his cousins Niuta and Heinz. Wolfi learned accordion and attended the Vienna Conservatoire on Saturday mornings. He may not have remembered later the little Rosl Fried at the Volksschule, but she remembered him. Who could have known how different their lives were about to be or that their paths would cross again some five years later in England?

Austria was annexed to Nazi Germany in March 1938 and the good times in Vienna were over. Ida and Maximilian organised for Wolfi to leave for England on the Kindertransport in May the following year. He was 12 years old. He started off being billeted in Margate but when it became clear that his parents were not going to be able to join him, the Zaslowskis, who had made it to Liverpool, organised for him to move with them to Whalley Range, Manchester from where he went to Technical College. Around this time his path crossed again with Rosl Fried and they got involved in left-wing activism alongside his cousins Heinz and Niuta. The links to Austria remained strong with Wolfi joining the Austrian Young Communist League and the Young Austrian Choir. He passed to go to Manchester Central for 6th form and whilst there got to the finals of the NW junior boxing championships. He then studied engineering at UMIST. His friendship with Rosl was blossoming and he eventually ended up living with the Frieds after the Zaslowskis returned to Vienna at the end of the war. Wolfi's parents had already died in Auschwitz in November 1944 but this devastating news did not reach Wolfi until 2 years later.

1947 was a key year in Wolfi's life. He married Rosl and got his British Citizenship, he was awarded his BSc in Electrical Engineering and took up an apprenticeship at Metropolitan Vickers. Although he remained Wolfi in the family, he was commonly known as Marc in England as he just could not bear people shortening his name or getting it wrong.

Let me turn now to Rosie's words about her husband of 74 years:

He was my rock, my inspiration, my mentor and my encyclopaedia. He was the most able, creative and generous partner to share my life and create a family with. We were fortunate to have enjoyed 30 years of retirement. He took great delight in seeing our family expand, sharing sorrow, and many happy occasions. Our love for each other never waned, and right to the end our relationship was vibrant. We shared our heritage and our past, and he was proud of his achievements and the security he left for me and the family.

The security that Marc gave his family came from his strong work ethic and successful career in engineering. After Metrovicks, he worked for Long and Crawford, then Brush Engineering, Erskine and Heap, finally TAC Construction. He became a chartered engineer in 1958 and travelled the world in his career.

However, as Rosie mentioned, life did not slow down for Marc after he retired in 1991. He and Rosie moved to York and he took on new challenges and ambitions. He was a hospital radio presenter, a public speaker, a German tutor, a school speaker on Jewish persecution, a committee member, a wood turner, and perhaps most impressively, Marc became a

violinmaker with 7 beautiful instruments to his name, which will continue to make music into the future.

Marc was a deft mechanic and ultimate fixer of broken things, at the same time as cutting a youthful and dapper figure, entertaining people with his accordion, a swimmer and teller of long-winded Jewish jokes. Let's listen now to what Lesley has to say about her father:

Perhaps you could find a better chat-up line for the man who will become your husband than 'My Daddy can do anything'! This was said, not as a challenge, but in pride and truthfulness: I really did think that there was nothing he was incapable of, and Alan, fortunately, didn't take the huff!

When I was about 3, and Paul 6, my parents had a two-seater car for a short while. But that wasn't a problem – he turned the parcel shelf into a little bench seat for the two of us. Of course, this was long before seatbelts became compulsory, even in the front seats, but had they been required, then no doubt he would have sorted that out, too. At 16, proud of now having a pair of clarinets, I needed a clarinet stand. The unique stand he made me has been all over the world, and is still in use today. It was by my side during the recording of the piece of music you'll hear as we say goodbye. I could go on for hours about all the beautiful things he made, and that was even before violin-making became a passion, but there was so much more. He instilled a confidence into Paul and me – if we wanted to do it, we could, with enough focus and application. When he taught me to drive, the very first thing he did was to sit with me in the car, which was in the drive, and facing about 2 metres from the garage door, and show me how to edge forward! What faith in me!

This is all practical stuff, but Dad, and Mum too, taught us so much more. In a word, I would say that it was how to be a 'Mensch'. He set a perfect example of how to be a caring, generous, thoughtful, socially responsible human being. How to make the best of a less than perfect situation (for example a caravan holiday memorable for the pouring rain – what fun we had). How not to bear grudges. And, as we grew up and fled the nest, how to be independent in the knowledge that the security of the family which we were fortunate to have been brought up in was always there as a secure bedrock.

Dad, from Paul and me, thank you for everything.

There was a deep poignancy and connection the last time that Paul and Marc met, their shared consciousness of their own mortality penetrating to the core of their love and affirming their pride in each other.

Paul and Lesley between them gave Marc six grandchildren who in return have produced nine great grandchildren so far. Opa was a key person in all their lives, offering advice, providing encouragement and enjoying their company unconditionally. He took them on trips to Vienna to show them his neighbourhood and the balcony from which he had shot at a Nazi with his toy pistol. He made them beautiful wooden toys which are now treasured heirlooms, with the two pieces of wood ready on his workbench that will sadly never be fashioned into toys for the most recent babies.

Jacob said how his Opa had an impeccable moral compass and Katy said:

'he had shown us that what life throws at us is not about what we suffer, but what we survive, and not just surviving, but doing the best we can, and sharing, celebrating and treasuring this with those we love.'

Hannah noted the deep tenderness and connection he had with his great grandchildren, observing and treasuring the sweetness of his last meeting with baby Oliver. Let's listen now to Tom's poem written for his Opa:

*You gave us all, something we cannot measure
The love of our family, a thing to treasure
Not material items, not treasure and gold
But the important thing, we all now hold.*

*You came from Vienna, on your own
Brave as boots, not one moan
You gave so much love, to Rosl/Nana
And with soft, gentle manner*

*You had a son, and daughter too
Your love for them grew and grew*

*With love, comes happiness and reflection
And time for strong family connections*

*The memories of you, are fond and long
Your boxing days, wow you were strong
Your fax machine, your workshop too
You'd mend everything, to Timbucktoo*

*Every family gathering we had
There would always be you Opa, and my dad
A smile on your face, a drink for all
The warmth you showed, to one and all
The love and gaze, to your wife Nana,
And the amazing skill with your spanner*

*You loved the hugs, the kids, the joy
You made so many gorgeous toys*

*My dad would say, he was proud of you
If the foot was in the other shoe
And also what we'll cherish most
Is a happy family, and for that, a toast.*

Lastly, we must pay tribute to Marc's award of the British Empire Medal at the end of last year. He was really proud to receive this award and was touched that the Lord-Lieutenant of North Yorkshire, visited him personally in a lockdown-free window to present the Medal for his services to Holocaust Education and Awareness where he has talked to some 10,000 people of his experience and the lessons to be learned. Really valuable work that will have a lasting impact and a testament to Marc's ability to rise above his traumas. As Viktor Frankl said:

'Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is the power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and freedom'.

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