

Holocaust Resister Biography: Fernande Keufgens Davis



Fernande Keufgens Davis was sixteen years old, one of eight children in a close-knit Belgian family living in the small town of Montzen, when the Germans invaded Belgium in May 1940 and changed her life. Her father remembered the horrors of World War I and, hoping to protect Fernande from deportation, sent her to Andenne, to work in the household of a friend. But war exploded nevertheless on their doorstep.

“I had all kinds of courage and guts; I don’t know where that came from,” says Fernande Keufgens Davis (“Freddie”) of the risks that she took as a teenager in the Belgian Resistance. After the shock of finding that her formerly occupied village had been annexed as part of Germany, Davis was drafted to work in a German munitions factory. Determined not to aid the enemy, she jumped from the train and went underground, to join the Maquis.

Davis now resides in the United States. After the war, she helped her family by working before entering Brugmann University School of Nursing in Brussels in 1947. Two years later she moved to the Philadelphia area of the U. S. to be married in Doylestown. She earned a secretarial diploma at the Lansdale School of Business, attended Temple University and Gwynedd Mercy College, where she earned a B.A. in French. She taught French at Gwynedd Mercy Academy and College, then at Germantown Academy, and served as Head of their Modern Language Department. In 1981, she received the Outstanding Teacher of the Year award from Germantown Academy. Davis and her American soldier sweetheart enjoyed fifty-four years of married life together.

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Witness to History Project:

The Witness To History Project is designed to further the message and lessons of the Holocaust by direct interaction between students or interested adults and Holocaust survivors. Participants "adopt" a survivor by learning his or her unique account of via listening to the survivor tell his/her story, asking questions, writing a biography, reviewing a videotape, and memorizing and re-telling the story to others. Ultimately, the participant will have the lifelong job of educating others about the Holocaust by sharing this personal narrative. Contact the Holocaust Awareness Museum to participate.

Holocaust Awareness Museum and Education Center

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