

Frank Robert Greenberg

Died: September 20, 2012

Frank died on Monday, September 24, 2012. At the time of his death he was 73 years old and a resident of the Jewish Home of San Francisco, where he had lived for about two years.

Raised in Brookline, Massachusetts, Frank graduated from Brookline High School, where he served on the student council, was in the dramatics club, and was manager of the school's baseball team.

At Dartmouth, Frank majored in philosophy, and became a member of Pi Lambda Phi fraternity, of which he was treasurer his junior and senior years, also serving as a member of the Interfraternity Treasurer's Council (IFTC) the same two years. He was on the staff of the Aegis his first three years, and in those same years was involved with the college radio station, WDCR. He was on the winter carnival committee as a freshman.

As a senior at Dartmouth, Frank wrote in our 25th reunion yearbook in 1986 about his future plans. "I wasn't sure where I wanted to go next. I knew I had to stay out of the draft, so graduate school was my only answer. Majoring in philosophy, I naturally considered graduate work in that field. But that seemed impractical from an economic standpoint. I received catalogues from business schools, law schools, and other graduate schools. The law school catalogues were the most interesting, so I sent out my applications, and started at Columbia."

After graduating from Columbia University School of Law, Frank began practicing in New York, first as in-house counsel with a brokerage firm, then in private practice. A few years later, he and his spouse Barbara moved with their two children to the suburbs of Larchmont (into "a Tudor house yet," he said).

In his reflection for our 25th, Frank described the progression in his life and thinking during the 1970's. "It soon became apparent that I did not fit into the suburban scene," he wrote. He became involved in the anti-war movement. He learned transcendental meditation, and he and his wife used their Larchmont home for training in the practice. "I let the grass grow naturally wild," he said, and bought a VW microbus instead of a Volvo station wagon, and listened to Bob Dylan and the Doors.

In about 1972-1974 Frank and his wife and children moved to California, without jobs, and settled into a house in Woodacre, a town in Marin County's San Geronimo Valley north of San Francisco. Frank took and passed the California bar in May 1973, and started work with a San Francisco law firm.

In 1977, Frank said, he and Barbara divorced.

In the concluding paragraph to his 1986 reflection, Frank tells us that the divorce “was the beginning of many changes for me. I had what can only be called a nervous breakdown and developed symptoms of a manic-depressive disorder. During the last five years I have been struggling with the illness and have not worked as an attorney or in any other capacity. I am stabilized now and volunteering my legal services at the Marin County Superior Court. I may reenter the profession but have misgivings. I am nonetheless optimistic about the future.” He became inactive with the California Bar Association in January 1982.

Frank suffered from the disorder for the rest of his life. Our 35th and 40th reunion publications only note addresses for him, in Kentfield and San Rafael, California, respectively, both not far from the Woodacre address where he landed after moving with Barbara from New York earlier in the 1970’s.

His friend and our classmate Gerry Kaminsky said in an e-mail in November, 2013, that soon after starting in law again after the move to California, “Frank’s underlying bipolar disorder took over, and he had a hard time for the rest of his life. To go into the details is probably not important. He always maintained his love of Dartmouth but in later years could not travel and so did not attend reunions.”

Elliott Weiss also kept in some touch with Frank, and wrote a remembrance about him in an e-mail in October, 2013.

“I’ll always owe Frank Greenberg a debt of gratitude,” Elliott said, “because, when I returned to New York 16 months after graduating from law school, I called Frank to ask for names of women I might date, and he provided me with the name of the woman to whom I’ve now been married for 47 years. Frank soon thereafter married Barbara, the woman from whom he’d gotten that woman’s name, and for a few years they lived a conventional suburban existence, with Frank working as an in-house lawyer for Bache & Co. in New York. But then, as Frank told it to me, he had an epiphany during a cross-country trip with his family, and shortly thereafter they all moved to a rural area of Marin County. My last clear memory of Frank was of him smoking something that didn’t smell like tobacco, sitting in his Marin house which was surrounded by woods, was heated by a wood-burning stove, and had a goat sharing the residence.”

“Unfortunately, shortly thereafter,” Elliott wrote, “life went downhill for Frank.” He and his wife separated, he put on a great deal of weight, and he ultimately spent the last several years of his life in the Jewish Home of San Francisco. Elliott remembers that Frank “would occasionally call me and other friends from Dartmouth to ramble on about how he was planning to marry Barbara again. Though I tried to humor Frank in those conversations, I’m sure those other friends found those conversations as distressing as I did.”

Frank wrote a reflection for our 50th reunion yearbook, “Paths We’ve Taken.” At the time he wrote it he was living at his last known address, the Jewish Home of San Francisco, located at 302 Silver Avenue. He said he had two main goals in life, to read the books on

his book list within the next three years, and to write a book of his life, in poetry. “The book is about the lessons and experience of life,” he said. “The book is addressed to me as a prophet.”

Frank may have seen himself as a Prophet. “Passion is quite real for me as a prophet,” he wrote. Although he much preferred living, he said, “A prophet is prepared to die for what I consider to be freedom, morality, and numbness.”

Then he closed his reflection. “I have learned a lot about life in the past few years. A most important lesson I’ve learned is that life is not a concept in your mind, or a word or a piece of paper. It is an experience to be lived.”

“Every night,” he wrote, “I say the same prayer: Jesus loves me, God loves me just as I am, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Every morning I say the same prayer: thank you God, for giving me the privilege of living yet another day. Thank God I’m alive.”

Frank ended his reflection: “I could go on with more, but space does not permit, so I will end, with much love.”

The staff at the Jewish Home remembers Frank. “He was a nice man, he had a good sense of humor,” said Rabbi Sheldon Marder. “He was also brilliant.”

Mark Friedlander said, “he was full of charm, he was somebody we enjoyed talking with. He embraced life in his last year here, performed in shows, wrote for our newsletter, and was very engaged.”

“He was a very colorful character,” said Ilana Glaun. She recalled one of Frank’s last entries in the newsletter that appeared in the October 2011 issue. It included, she said, the closing lines from *The Toad*, by Hans Christian Andersen. “We haven’t yet got eyes that can gaze into all the splendor that God has created, but we shall get them one day, and that will be the finest fairy tale of all, for we will be in it ourselves.”

Frank had two children, Pamela and Adam.