

Sisters of the Resistance

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Two Women Who Defied the Nazis

By James G. Fausone



Sisters [Freddie and Truus Oversteegen](#) were raised in

an activist household. After their parents divorced, their mother involved them in fighting injustices. From taking in Jewish refugees into their tiny apartment to placing warnings on German posters calling men to work, these girls always followed their mother's lead on high moral principles. Freddie was able to recall the cruelty of Hitlerism years after the events.

"I remember how people were taken from their homes. The Germans were banging on doors with the butts of their rifles – that made so much noise, you'd hear it in the entire neighborhood. And they would always yell – it was very frightening."

As the resistance began to grow in numbers, the girls joined their mother in handing out anti-Nazi newspapers and pamphlets. They continued to glue warnings on the German work posters and then escaped on their bikes. As young Truus and even younger Freddie biked away, no one suspected two young girls to be behind the warnings.

These dangerous acts would be severely punished if they were ever caught, and soon, one person did discover their actions. A Harlem Council of Resistance commander came to their ramshackle apartment and asked if the two would be interested in joining the resistance. After getting their mother's consent, the two girls traveled to the underground training camp. There were only seven others, and the sisters were the only two girls. In a [2016 interview with Vice Magazine](#), Freddie said, *"I thought we would be starting a kind of secret army. The man that came to our door said that we would get military training, and they did teach us a thing or two."*



The girls were taught basic skills, marching, how

to move in the woods, and of course, shooting skills. Although they had already accepted a position in the resistance, they were not informed until much later that their roles would involve sabotage and assassination. They started with railway lines and bridges before being asked to begin assassin missions by themselves. Freddie responded to their first mission by saying, *"Well, that's something I've never done before!"* but don't be fooled. The work was difficult, not just physically, but emotionally. Freddie was the first to shoot a Nazi soldier and it never got easier. Truus said:

"It was tragic and very difficult, and we cried about it afterward. We did not feel it suited us-it never suits anybody, unless they are real criminals ... One loses everything. It poisons the beautiful things in life."

The two girls would lure men out of bars and take them for a stroll in the woods. Once they reached a secluded area the girls would shoot the Nazi. Instinctively the first time Freddie killed someone, she felt the human need to reach out and help. Although she was the one to shoot the gun, she had the impulse to want to help an injured person.



As the girls continued with their assignments, they met

another woman in the resistance. Hannie Schaft, a former university student who dropped out after refusing to sign a loyalty pledge to Nazi Germany, became infamous in Germany. She was only known as “the girl with the red hair” and she quickly rose to Germany’s ‘most wanted list’.

She and the sisters were extremely close and formed a sabotage and assassination cell together. They transported Jewish people into hiding and placed a communist flag at the National Socialist Movement’s headquarters.

Unfortunately, only Freddie and Truus would survive the war. Hannie was caught at a checkpoint with illegal newspapers. The security personnel had been warned of the girl with the red hair, and even though Hannie had dyed her hair black to hide her identity, they arrested her.

She resisted brutal interrogations and torture sessions. She was executed just a few weeks before the war ended. Reports show that her executioner missed their first shot. Hannie’s last words were “*I shoot better than you*” before they managed to kill her.

After the war, the two girls went on different paths. Truus married a man named Piet Menger in 1945 and settled down to raise a family. She had four children, the oldest of which was named Hannie. Freddie also married and had children which she felt helped her cope with the horrors of the past. Truus coped by becoming more outspoken about her experiences, speaking of war, antisemitism, and tolerance while making a living as an artist.



In 1967, she was designated as one of the

Righteous Among Nations which honors those who risked their lives to help the Jewish people. She also wrote a book about the war titled ‘When Not, Now Not, Never’ in 1982. In 2014 the sisters received national recognition for their service in the form of the Mobilisatie-Oorlogskruis, or “War Mobilization Cross.” Before they [both passed away at age 92.](#)

About the Author

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