

This is a taping of an interview for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The person being interviewed is Frank Ephraim. The interviewee is Nancy Alper. It's February the 28th, 1997. And this is the beginning of tape two side A. And Frank, we were talking about your grandfather's death, his illness, and his death right before Kristallnacht.

Yes, my grandfather took severely ill on about must have been in October of 1938. And since no Jewish hospitals were really no longer around, he was taken to one of the existing hospitals, a Christian hospital. And I did visit him there once with my parents. But he died on November the 8th, 1938, a significant day. The next night was the Kristallnacht, the crystal night, the Night of Broken Glass.

And he was buried. And they did hold a funeral and had all that. That was still possible to do. And he was buried at the Weissensee Cemetery, which is in a sort of northern part of Berlin. The district Weissensee is sort of characterized it as a working class district. It has a huge, and still existing today, a huge Jewish cemetery. And it's tree covered. It's like a park. I had a chance to visit it twice, once in 1992 and once in 1995.

I did actually discover the exact grave. Because when my parents visited the area in the '60s and I visiting in the 1992 could not actually determine the exact site of the grave. This last time, in 1996, I was there with the person that does the gravestones. And he had a map. And the authorities there had a map. We found the exact grave. And there was a small gravestone with his name on it. So I took a picture of that for my father who was still alive at the time.

So that's where he was buried. My parents, of course, were at the funeral services. I was not. And that was there, of course, it was the mourning period after that for him. And of course, that was sort of aggravated by the Kristallnacht, the events of crystal night. Because my father certainly at that night was-- wanted to go to the synagogue for the services, Armenian service, for his father and, of course, found that the synagogue had been burnt.

And as a result, that could not be held. So he was there hardly knowing that this had happened during the night. Because where we lived, we were somewhat distanced from the area. And so we weren't-- he was not really aware that there was something going on, which kind of interesting because it was a Nazi-sponsored event and-- but was not really known because-- until the next day when the radio announced the event, what happened but, of course, from the Nazi point of view.

So that was a double shock for my father that he had to confront a burning, a burnt out synagogue when he wanted to say the mourning prayer for his father.

Did anything happen to the family store during that Kristallnacht period?

By that time, the store hadn't-- it was no longer in their hands. I believe they had sold it, because they were retired. And so the store was no longer in existence. We don't know, I certainly I don't know what, if anything, happened to that store in that area. However, of course, any Jewish store that you walked by had either its glass smashed or there was graffiti on it. Or in many cases, they had a storm trooper type standing in front of it. That was throughout Berlin.

There was no-- hardly a store or business that was unscathed at that, on that day. And of course, that day was a major signal. By now, things had come to a point of violence, widespread official violence, whereas before it was somewhat hidden, particularly in a largely like Berlin. There, it was now official, visible, and it certainly now most people who were antsy or not certain about what to do, I think by then made up their mind. And for those who could, they would leave.

Those were your child impressions that as you walked with your parents, you saw stores that had windows had been smashed and storm troopers the day after?

Yes. Yes. You saw them. You know, it remind me almost of the riots that we had here in Washington after the death of-- assassination of Martin Luther King when stores along the 14th Street area were smashed and burned out and so on. And the next morning, you had National Guard troops standing in front. You know, it was almost the picture reflect-- a reflective image of that, quite different of course in context. I mean, this was not done by the authorities. There, it was.

So it had a different message.

Around that time, what do you remember about your parents' activities in talking about or actually trying to get you out of the country? I assume they already had things in the works. So maybe you can describe how that progressed from your child's eye.

Well, at that time, one of the family members, the people that were-- where he was a physician, and they had, if I remember describing, that they came actually from the town called Bad Nauheim and but lived in Berlin. And they were ready to emigrate to the United States, having been given an affidavit by the American side of the family who were living in St. Paul, Minnesota.

And there was some discussion as to perhaps they offered to take me with them to the United States. They, in turn, had two daughters who were going along with them. These two daughters were my-- one was a year younger than I. And one was about three or four years older than I. So they were ages 7 and 11. And I was age 8, almost 8. I was 7 actually. This was 1930, late 1938. So there was this thought.

However, I think my parents did not really want to do that. Because they already had, at that time, made contact with a relative of my mother's, a distant cousin, who, at the time, was living in the Philippine Islands, in Manila. And his history very briefly was, he was born in Germany, married. He was in business. He had to leave Germany very early on in the '30s, reasons not really known.

He escaped to Spain and stayed in Madrid until the beginning of the Spanish Civil War in 1936. And I'm not certain whether he had to leave, because he always was a sort of a sharp businessman, quite bright. But one isn't clear as to how and what he was doing. But there, too, he left the Philippines. And by some strange connection, if one recalls the history, the Philippines had been run by Spain since their discovery by Magellan.

And there were connections between the Spanish people, the Spanish community, Spanish business with the Philippines, a lot of Spaniards or ex-Spaniards living there. So he managed to get into the Philippines with his family. And there, the Philippines at the time was an American Commonwealth and was sort of under the same restrictions about immigration entry quotas as the United States.

But the United States quotas were essentially closed. One could not get into this country, unless one were a physician or had a job or some special skill that was needed. So the Philippines, there there were some minor changes in the rules or whatever applied, and the American Consulate was able to issue entry visas, once an affidavit had been put together by a receiving party, which was this distant cousin.

And that began to firm up as we went along in the latter part of 1938. So that, yes, we were scheduled to leave for the Philippine Islands sometime in February of 1939.

Now let me understand the affidavits. The purpose of the affidavit was to show the United States Consulate that you would be sponsored, or taken care of, or supported in some way for some period of time if you were allowed to emigrate. Is that correct?

That's absolutely correct. Yes, that was a requirement. In order to get a visa, the entrance visa, an affidavit had to be put down, laid down, before the American Consulate or American authority by someone who was willing to sponsor and support you and the family for whatever period of time, so that you'd not be a burden on the local economy.

What do you remember being part of while all this was going on? For example, did you go with your parents to the American Consulate to try to get your visa, or do you remember the affidavit coming in the mail from the cousin?

I don't remember any of that, the sort of paperwork and letters. I do recall, at one time, that the thing was set, that the affidavit had been given, that a visa had been issued, and that things were all set for entering the Philippines. However, there came then the issue of departing Germany. The German authorities, at that time, allowed Jews to leave, provided they left for certain.

And also, they're beginning to have restrictions on what one could take along. Up until that time, roughly speaking early 1939, Jews were allowed to take along what is called a lift. A lift, this is-- it's an English word. It's a container, a large container where you could store furniture and things of that nature, personal belongings, anything from couches to chairs and what have you. They were allowed to take one of these along to be loaded aboard ship in Hamburg or Bremen and to be shipped to the United States or wherever.

In our case, going all the way to the Philippines, a lift, so to speak, was not really feasible. We weren't sure, this was a tropical area. We weren't keen on taking furniture. So we limited our things to suitcases, steamer trunks, hanging steamer trunks, and things of that kind and packed two large cases of things that were to be shipped to my aunt who lived, at that time, in the Illinois, in Chicago, near Chicago.

And these were like winter clothes, which we knew we would not need in the Philippines. So that was sort of our general preparations for departure. But, of course, to get authorization to leave, you had to get cleared by the German government and primarily by the Gestapo, the Geheime Staatspolizei, secret state police, who came to our house to actually check out all the things that we would be taking along.

So we had to display all the stuff that we were going to pack and take with us. I recall my mother pulling out a red velvet, I don't know, a black velvet cushion on which were pinned about seven medals that belonged to her father, that he had won as a officer in the First World War. Amongst these was the Iron Cross, second class I believe, and which he had earned or in whatever manner.

And she asked them whether it was OK to take these medals along. Because this was something that was strictly German. And they were always concerned that you would not depart with anything that was German or belonged to the German state or that related to it as a Jew, because you were no longer a real member of the German society. So but they said that was OK, take that with you. And so she packed it, along with some other things.

And they checked out everything. I was there at the time. And there wasn't too much commotion. It was two sort of bureaucratic type people. And then they signed some little slip of paper. And that cleared us for packing up and whatever. And they left. They spent say two hours, three hours in the apartment to check it all out. And at that point, you know, we were in the state of departure.

Was this February of '39 by then?

Yes, that was approximately at the beginning of February or end of January 1939. We are now on the preparation stage to leave the country. So we have packed everything. These trunks, steamer trunks, were picked up to be taken to a ship which would be departing from Genoa, Italy sometime around February the 23rd or 24th of 1939.

But this was not the ship, this wasn't the SS Victoria?

Yes, that was the SS Victoria that was going to be taking us from Genoa, Italy to Manila, Philippines. So we had booked passage on the ship through the company, shipping company, steamship company. It's called Lloyd Triestino. The Lloyd Triestino ran a shipping service to the Far East. The route would be starting in Genoa to Naples to Port Said, at the head of the Suez Canal, to Aden, at the other side of the Suez Canal, from Aden to what in those days was called Colombo, Ceylon, now called Sri Lanka, from there to Bombay, from there to Singapore, and from Singapore to Manila, and from Manila to Hong Kong, and from Hong Kong to Shanghai.

Very significant, because the ships were usually loaded with people heading for Shanghai. So that was the route. They had four ships that plied this route. The Victoria was the smallest they had. The largest was Conte Biancamano. They had the Conte Verde and the Conte Rosso.

Now you, to back up a little bit, your luggage was shipped away. And what confused me was, my recollection was you left from Genoa on the SS Victoria in March. So is that incorrect?

Well, actually our arrival in the Philippines was March the 16th, 1939. So you have to work back three weeks, which was the passage time. And so we're talking probably around the 23rd or so, 24th of February, that we actually left to Genoa. What we did was when we actually left Berlin, we closed the apartment. It was a rental. So, you know, we didn't have to do any selling anything of that sort. The rent was paid up to that time.

We took a taxi with our hand luggage to the railroad station in Berlin. It was called the Anhalter Bahnhof. It's right in the center of Berlin. It still exists today as a freight railyard. In those days, it was a major passenger railroad station, Anhalter Bahnhof. At the Bahnhof, it was crowded with people. It was full of the SS, the various Nazi organizations checking everybody out. It was, of course, quite obvious all the passengers on this train which left at night were Jews or were leaving.

So as usual, they had to check everything three times. We met other people that my parents knew, a couple, that were also leaving. But by coincidence met them, because we did not realize they were also leaving that night. We got aboard the train. And the train left Berlin station. I think it must have been-- oh, it was I believe the 20th of February. Because my birthday's on the 19th.

And I recall, I'd forgotten whether I was actually celebrating the birthday on the train the next morning or whether it was still in Berlin. Anyway, it was either the 19th or the 20th. So the train then went on to Munich from Berlin. And there we had to change, change trains, and went on from Munich to the Brenner Pass. The Brenner Pass, of course, separates Austria from Italy. And some of the passage was through Austria, very pretty trip.

But in Brenner, what usually is a simple border crossing, and you stay on the train to continue on to Genoa, turned out to be almost a day and a half stop. Because we all had to leave the train, luggage and all. The Germans insistent-- insisting on searching through all the luggage, that is the German border side. And this was a large hall, which was on one side with Germans, but in the rest of it were Italians already.

These were the Carabinieri, who wore sort of dark green uniforms and dark green capes. And when you approached them to ask a questions, they always-- they could not either understand or did not feel like answering, because you were still under German jurisdiction. They also searched everybody physically to make sure they carried nothing that was not sealed. Wedding bands, any gold jewelry that you were allowed to take, and there was a limit on what you could take, had to be sealed in boxes or envelopes before you left Germany.

There was a big red wax seal on the stuff. And you could not open that until you crossed the border. That was to ensure that you didn't take extra things with you, only the things that you were supposed to. So that whole search procedure delayed us. And the train left without us. So we had to wait for the next train by the time we were done. We got on board the next train and did not arrive in Genoa until like 2:00 in the morning at some point. It was early in the morning.

And there with a taxi took us to hotel. And I remember the name of the hotel. It was The Hotel Helvetia, like name Swiss, name Helvetia. And we stayed there the night. And the next day, there were members of the Italian Jewish community who sort of received refugees from Germany or wherever coming across the border. And they sort of knew where they would be. And they sort of took us in hand and sort of we toured the city with them a little bit. They showed us sights.

In fact, they took us up on one of these electric, those railways up the side of a mountain. I think it was the Rigi, I'm not sure, but just for sightseeing. And then a day later, we, again, in a cab and went to dockside to board the ship, the SS Victoria. And--

Do you remember how you felt or how you thought your parents felt say right before you crossed into Italy, for example, with this long delayed search, whether it seemed like an adventure or it seemed frightening or a bit of both from a child's perspective?

Yes. It was certainly frightening. Because here you were sort of held up by the Germans, and you weren't sure where they'd let you go and what would happen. And they always had always one more thing to check out, like a personal search. And so that was very nerve-wracking, beside having to wait. And there's no food available. There were all these

little personal needs that were not-- you couldn't take care of too well.

But eventually, they let us go to the next-- and then this train we were on left with-- and we were wondering what would happen, you know, is there another train? And then via had to check on that. And yes, there was another train. And then the Carabinieri, and we went over to the Italian side. And the Carabinieri, the border guards, then took care of things. And they were sort of nondescript in their manner. And we boarded the train.

And at that point, crossing into Italy, even though Italy was under Mussolini and the fascists, was a relief. Not knowing then, my parents had worked some sort of a code before to let people know back in Germany whether we made it across safely. And they wrote back once we got through to Italy or telegraphed that this code, this certain use of certain words, which said, yes, we have successfully crossed the border and we're wherever, Genoa.

I have a note from the file that your parents, or your mother, was able to take hidden jewelry with them, too. And I wonder what the circumstances were for that.

I don't recall that. She may have hidden a ring or two or some, whatever, I am not certain about it. But I do recall--

Frank, before we go on to the sea voyage, why don't you tell me what, if anything, you recall about any particular difficulties your family might have had leaving Germany by virtue of your father's employment or educational status, and anything you remember about saying goodbye to family members or friends?

As far as his college or work status is concerned, I don't think there was any real problem. He simply left the company and they knew why. It was, I think, it was still partially a Jewish company. And it was pretty obvious why he would have to leave. And there was no problem there at all. As far as saying goodbye, I was concerned, obviously, I wasn't there at the scene. But my grandmother, I did say goodbye to her.

You know, she was left. And my uncle came over, his younger brother, but his younger brother was one of these fellows that could do anything. And so they had hoped to somehow bring them out as well later, once we had reached the Philippines and were able to perhaps settle and do-- or continue on to the United States. That was really the plan and see what we could do about getting them out of there.

My grandmother was not eager to leave. She felt she was kind of old. And she wanted to stay. And having just buried her husband not too long before, it was very difficult-- would have been difficult for her to leave. We said goodbye to his two aunts that who had also had plans to leave Germany. They actually ended up in Chile, in Santiago, Chile. But other than that, my mother's side, the only people left were an aunt and her husband, who had moved to Berlin, and some other distant relatives.

As I mentioned before, her younger brother and sister had left for the United States in the mid '30s. So I left. I left my school in the middle of the semester. But again, that was becoming a common thing. So I was just one of the other-- another kid leaving the country. It was not a unique situation. So I-- just trying to recall. Yeah, another kid was about to leave as well the next day type of thing.

And well, I've never seen any of these kids again/ I have no idea what happened to them. I'm sure many left or at least certain some left. Others, you know, must have perished I'm sure. So but it was in a way partially a relief. I do remember one incident, of course, that my father-- I always liked trains and toys and junk like that. He took me downtown to the largest department store in Berlin. It's called the KaDeWe, which is a contraction of the full name Kaufhaus des Westens. It's a huge department store. It still exists today.

And he took me there. Because I've often gone there with my mother. They had a restaurant in one of the levels. And we ate there once. And he took me to the toy department and bought me an electric train. And it was one of these H O gauge railroads, which never did work. Because the Philippines had a different power [? sharing ?] system. But and that in itself will lead me to another story much later on about that particular model railroad.

It was destroyed during the Second World War when we lived in the house in the Philippines and was among many

things that was destroyed. But he did take me there and take this with me. And I did, I packed it into a smaller box. And that's, as I say, we left. As a child, it was more adventure than anything else, high adventure, constantly changing railroads, trains, dining cars, bunks, chairs, crossing into Italy.

By the railway side, you know, German plumbing is one thing. Italian is another. And what you'd see there by the wayside, the Italian type, stoop type, so-called Turkish toilets, were quite different from what I was used to and different things. And the food was different. The train got very crowded and was dark of night. And nobody knew exactly what the next stop would be, because there were several stops before you hit Genoa.

So my father and others would stand on the steps outside the train as it was roaring into the station to find out whether this was Genoa or not. So that we knew when to get out, because the train was literally packed with Italians and people who were traveling at that time.

Were a lot of the people also leaving the country? Were there are a lot of Jews on the train? And do you remember the actual journey, that is, which towns you went through to get to Genoa?

Yes, there were lots-- a good number of Jews heading for Italy. Because that was a major departure point for the Far East. I remember, the trains were packed. And there was-- we did manage to get in one dining car. The first night on the train, we were in sleepers actually. The towns, of course, to Munich, we went through many German cities and then Munich south through Austria, Innsbruck, and places like that it stopped.

And then Brenner, the Brenner Pass, and then, of course, the other trains into Italy, I think, if I forgot it was Bolzano was one of the cities that we went through. But it was dark. By the time we went into Italy, it was dark. So I didn't see that part of Italy very well.

And this was a package deal. The train trip and the ship transport were all together, yes, no?

No, they didn't have package deals in those days. You got yourself a passage on a ship. And then to get there, you went, of course, by train, buying the tickets. And that, again, required-- you had to, when you were going out of the country, you had to show why and that you had a visa and so forth. Again, that was highly controlled by the Nazis as to who left, who came in. And so if you had an authorization, if you had the visa for another country, and the entry visa into Italy, you had to have that as well. That, of course, allowed you.

But all this time, of course, you carried this German passport which had-- with a red J in it. And they immediately knew who and what you were, the German authorities. The Italians were less sensitive to that sort of thing. They seemed to, you know, this was not their primary interest. And so Italy felt almost like a free country at that point. But whole of-- all of it was a massive adventure. And I was eight years old. And all these things coming one after the other, happening very fast. It was very interesting, I found it.

Do you remember any incidents with the Italian fascists, with any of the soldiers at any of the points along the way on your way to Genoa or once you got there, or the immigration, Italian immigration officials?

None whatsoever. There was not-- the only military I did see, two types, one was the typical Carabinieri with the green capes at the border, who were very quiet types of people and very sort of official types. The others were at the railway stations, where they have a special Italian police. They wear sort of almost like the old-fashioned three cornered hat type and with a white leather band across their chest, sort of formal uniforms.

And they would patrol just up and down in pairs, always beautifully dressed but not, I mean, they did not in any way, you know, single us out. It was just their job to walk up and down. The authorities on the train, there may have been a check or two. But there was, again, one did not sense any problem in Italy. Or there might have been. There were obviously Italian fascists. But one didn't see them. There was not that well displayed.

How long did the trip take across Italy? And what do you remember about getting to Genoa?

Well, the first thing I remember was that the trip from the Brenner to Genoa must have been approximately six, seven hours, I'm guessing. As I say, most of it was late afternoon and night. We arrived in Genoa at approximately 2:00, 3:00 in the morning. We were all kind of tired by then, had not slept very well. We did get to this hotel, which was kind of-- it was locked. We had to ring the bell.

And a man in sort of slippers came out, a night clerk. And we had reservations. So that was not a problem. He showed us to the rooms, registered us. We showed the passport. Again, there was no incident. This was just another person working there. And that was it. Next morning, we had breakfast. And again, it was a very subdued. It was not threatening. And then as I mentioned before, members of the Italian Jewish community showed up and led us around and talked to us.

Also, I want to clarify something that I think we were talking about earlier. You were saying to me that, contrary to the pre-interview material, that you don't recall your parents hiding any jewelry or other materials in the process of leaving the country.

Yes, I don't recall saying that. It might have been somewhat confusing. Because as I mentioned before, you were required to place all gold, wedding rings or other jewelry, into sealed boxes or envelopes before you left Germany and were then allowed to open it once you crossed into another country. My parents did that. And of course, they were also-- my mother certainly was searched, physically searched, by the Germans at Brenner.

So it would-- being her nature, it's most unlikely that she would have done that. There was not a great deal of jewelry she took with her anyway. And so I don't recall-- I don't know whether there was any implication that there was a hidden. Although, I'm sure people did that, if they had a lot of jewelry. Not in this case, I don't believe.

After breakfast at that hotel, did you then go directly to the ship?

No, we stayed a day in Genoa. Because the departure of the ship was like a day thereafter. And as I say, we toured Genoa and some of the outskirts. I think it was by cab or by a car. And these people showed us around and very nice. And then the next day, we-- I don't remember the evening what we did. We must have eaten somewhere. But we then left to go to the docks, to the ship, and boarded the ship, the SS Victoria.

And what do you remember about getting on the ship and your accommodations and the other circumstances of the trip?

Yes, in those days, these ships, as most ships, had three classes, the first class, the second class, and the third class. And some even had a fourth class, the so-called steerage. The largest ship of the line, the Conte Biancamano, had that fourth class. Victoria being the smallest had three classes, first, second, and third. And we were booked on second class. And these other friends of ours whom we'd met at the railway station in Berlin, they were in the third class.

But the differences, of course, first class had a very ornate dining room and the larger cabins. Second class had regular cabins. There was a set of bunks and a regular bed. And there were-- they were separated. Because each one had their areas on deck and swimming, sort of a box like swimming pool for the second class. And the ship also had, for some strange reason, deck cargo of automobiles, something like 20 cars were strapped to the ship on the decks.

In fact, in one incident I recall, I ran-- I was a wild kid. And I ran into one of those cars and the bumper edge went into my knee. So I had a big gash in my knee. And the Italian surgeon aboard, a doctor aboard the ship, he-- my father dragged me in there. I think it was bleeding like crazy. And he took one of these metal clamps and clamped it closed. This is rather than with a suture. But he felt that it was the best way to do that.

And sure enough, you know, he checked me out several times thereafter. And it healed up. And I still have the scar. So that was a incident I do remember. The other one was I tried to swim in one of those box like swimming pools with sort of a box placed on the deck with water. And the ship was rolling. And that water was just sloshing around. And it was a mess. I almost drowned there. I think I swallowed some water. And so but I got out of it OK.

The ship, the crew was Italian. It was a totally Italian operation of course. The dining steward, my mother thought it was

the handsomest guy. They showed up in these sort of black beautiful uniforms for serving. And you know, second class food was very good. The Italian cuisine at the time favored a lot of spaghetti, Italian meals, and great on desserts. They were sort of rum soaked. And the ice cream tasted full of cinnamon to us. But, you know, that's the Italian style. But it was good.

And so-- but one major incident, and one has to recall that the passengers on that ship were, roughly speaking, 90% German Austrian Jews. Now they decided, as on most ships, what you're going to have a ball sometime along the voyage. And so there was a big disagreement, and it's amazing, among the Jews, between the Viennese or the Austrian and the German Jews.

So the Viennese decided to have their Viennese ball. And the Germans and all the others, other than the Viennese, decided to have their own. So they had two balls instead of one. And that was kind of interesting, as a sociological phenomenon for that particular time to have a separate or-- although people could go to either one, I believe, affair. The other significant incident was this.

On board the ship was a family from India who were returning from Berlin. He was of the Maharajah or whatever, upper caste class from India. And he had gone to Germany for treatment for a heart condition. And they were returning with his wife and beautiful, beautiful daughter. All these single, the bachelors, really looked at her. She was always goddess-like-- goddess-like looking women. And they were traveling second class.

And they had their own table, you know, [INAUDIBLE] little tables. And one morning, the wife of the Indian showed up. And they always wore saris. And she showed up in a sari. It had a green background and white swastikas all over the place. That was the pattern of the sari. Now it is an Indian symbol, as we know, it was not invented--

This is a continuation of an interview for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum of Frank Ephraim. The date is February the 28, 1997. And the interview is being conducted by Nancy Alper. And Frank and I were discussing his voyage on the SS Victoria from Genoa all the way to the Philippines and an incident that happened in the dining room with an Indian woman's wearing a sari with swastikas on it.

As I mentioned, these were white swastikas on a sort of light green background. They were at breakfast time. And all the tables around them were occupied by refugees, Jews from Germany and Austria. And certainly everybody glanced over there and didn't quite know what to make of it. Because this couple and their daughter had been all very friendly. And they were very pleasant people and very civilized people returning to India, their home.

And we don't know quite what to do. I mean, obviously, . There was a certain offense and all that on the one hand. On the other, I suppose many realized the symbol was something that was more universal than the Nazi symbol. In any event, by lunchtime, she had changed. That was the upshot. I'm not certain whether someone had dropped a hint to the waiter or what happened. But she had put on another sari, of which she had many. And that was the end of that.

I'm not sure, they may have discussed it with them. Or they may have-- she may have talked to others about it and made some comment about doing this inadvertently and so on. But, you know, there was no harm done in any of it. So that was OK. If one will recall, 1939, one of the most popular dances was the Lambeth Walk. And that was being done big time aboard the ship. Because, after all, this was a luxury liner, although it had these three classes.

And people were entertained. And they were dancing. And certainly, it was a relief from the horrors and conditions that they had experienced in Germany and Austria and other parts of Europe. So the food was good, at least, might have been a little repetitive from time to time. In any event, our next stop, and I may be a little out of context here with the swastika story, but the next stop after Genoa was Naples.

We did not go ashore because the stop was about three or four hours. And really, there was no point of us going back in to access Italy for any reason. So we stayed-- everyone stayed aboard. The next stop was at 5 AM, a day or so later, at Port Said, Egypt. Of course, everyone was kind of excited because this was now the Middle East and very unique. And no one had ever been there. And so we were allowed ashore, because one must recall, the British held Egypt at that time.



The British were, contrary to a lot of thinking, were not very pro-Jewish ever and certainly not at that time. However, we landed not at-- the dock side was out in the breakwater, as it was called. And little boats took us in. And my father wanted to see Port Said. And we went at 5 AM ashore and just toured around a little bit. It was a large, smelly and dirty city, which-- with a lot of British troops around and Egyptians, some still in fezzes.

It was very, very interesting. But we got to get back to the ship, so we only had two or three hours at Port Said. Then the ship proceeded to the Suez Canal with a pilot aboard that was picked up in the port of Port Said. And on the way, of course, the ship was go slowly because there's two way traffic in the canal and no locks on the Suez Canal. And we would meet other ships very close by, tankers and other passenger liners going the other way and freighters.

And it was very exciting to see the crews and the people on these other ships, oh, 15, 20, 30 feet away. So everybody's aboard, you know, on the decks, cheering away. And on the Egyptian side, we saw a train. There's a railroad. It was all silver, aluminum, or whatever cars on the other side, which is the Sinai Peninsula. We occasionally saw a camel. And that was very exciting for us. After all, we hadn't seen camels in that particular environment before.

We passed through the portions of Ismailia, which is on the Suez Canal, the Great Bitter Lakes, and then finally came out at the other end at Suez and proceeded through Aden. The ship stopped in the port of Aden, again, not along dock side but out in the breakwater. And little patrol boats would come up. And again, it was a British possession. And what I remember was that they were lo-- they would have-- they had the people that live in Aden, the Adenese or Arabs, came aboard and hauling these big trunks of people boarding the ship at that point.

My parents wanted to go ashore in Aden. Because the man that had arrived in Berlin that one night on his motorcycle had died on the way to the Far East. And he was buried in Aden. But they were unable to leave the ship. The British did not allow anybody with a red J for Jewish in their German passport to leave the ship. That was one of the great policies of the British.

I should say, because I think I didn't earlier, that this is the second tape, side B, the second side of the tape.

We're back in Aden. And we just spent the night in Aden. And the ship then subsequently took off. And I believe our next stop, unless I am sadly mistaken, was the port of Colombo and at that time Ceylon, today Sri Lanka, again, a British possession. We were, again, docked not alongside a pier but out in the so-called breakwater or harbor and were taken in by a small boat, which was very low to the water.

And there were local people standing on the sides of the boat all around. It was very interesting. And this other family whom we had met on the ship whose son was my age, he was a little roly poly guy. If I recall, we were both the same age. He later became Assistant Mayor of San Francisco. And they were on their way onto Shanghai, rather than to Manila, as we were. Anyway the two families went ashore with others. And we went to along the bazaars.

And this is the first time that we actually saw what I suppose in most of Asia is this site of extreme poverty, you know, with kids carrying other young kids, mostly naked, running around in groups begging and just hounding the tourists or anyone else, people who were not-- were white or Caucasian or tourists that were visiting and begging for money or what have you. And it was-- things were not very clean in Colombo.

But we did go into one store and looked at some knickknacks, carvings, elephants or animals. And they, the store owner there kind of liked this other kid a lot. So he gave him a present of a little carving. But he also gave me one. And so after awhile, we went back to the ship. And again, the ship took off. They never stayed much longer than five to 10 hours in port.

[CLEARING THROAT]

The next stop, again, was at night. It was in Bombay. And about that time, we were close to the equator. And it was hot. And in Bombay, again, the British would not let us ashore, same reason, a red J. They let others who had other passports from other countries, they let them ashore. They did not let us ashore. In Bombay, lots of Indians boarded the ship for

the passage to either Singapore or Manila or elsewhere.

And this family, the ones with the swastika story, left the ship. They had arrived back home. So they got off in Bombay. I'm not sure if they were from Bombay or somewhere else. But anyway, that's where they got off the ship. And again, we left, not long after another four, five hours in Bombay. And then there was a passage of about two days to get to Singapore.

Now my father's always an old business man. And he got to know some of the Indians that came on board the ship, because they were also businessmen in textiles. And in fact, he met a fellow there that we were friends with in the Philippines thereafter for many years. So that, again, was a long, slow voyage to Singapore. In Singapore, the British did let us off the ship. Strange, the policy's different according to port. And there we were met by the widow and son of the man that had been buried in Aden.

And I had experienced a horrendous toothache a couple of nights before. And one of the first things is that she took us to her dentist in Singapore without an appointment. But nonetheless, he did the job on me. I guess it was a filling. And that was that. And after that, we toured around a little bit. And we stayed most of the day in port and then back on the ship.

And one of the incidents that my mother relays was that, as I mentioned before, the ship was filled with German and Austrian Jews. And for some reason, there were several bachelor Austrians, sort of tall, skinny guys. And they would congregate and talk along the rail. And as we were approaching Singapore, after having been at sea now for, oh, probably 2 and 1/2 weeks or whatever, about 2 and 1/2 weeks, they leaned over the rail and looked at the tropical jungle-like shoreline.

And one said to the other, and I'll translate it. I'll first say it in German or Viennese. [SPEAKING GERMAN] Because of one Gentile, one has to travel so far. And that was his expression about the, in his Viennese accent, about his comment about the situation. So anyway, we continued after Singapore a four day trip to Manila. And of course, now we were getting close to-- getting ready to disembark into the new land where we were going to be staying for a while, all very mysterious.

We approached the Philippines. And as you enter the Philippines, you enter into Manila Bay, the famous Dewey, damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead, Manila Bay. Manila Bay is guarded at its mouth by the island of Corregidor, also, of course, well known as result of the Second World War. There are two other islands. They were very small. We passed the island of Corregidor, not knowing its name at the time. And we entered Manila Bay, a huge bay.

And you could see the city in the distance, some high rises and huts and things like that. The pilot boat came out. And the pilot got aboard, as is customary. And the ship then was brought into the dock. Of course, on the decks all the time seeing things. The dock had not long before been constructed and completed. It was known as the famous Pier 7, the longest pier in the Far East. It could hold two passenger liners on each side. And that's where the ship docked.

As we neared the dock, we all observed the people standing dockside all wearing white suits. Everybody wearing white linen suits, the men did anyway. Women wore sort of colorful things. It was a tropical climate. We could tell, of course, the ship was hot as hell. And we did finally spy our distant cousin who was there with his wife, their driver, and a car. So we got off the ship finally. And they took us to their house.

And we stayed at their house for several weeks until we were able to find something for ourselves. First impression of landing in the Philippines, of course, one looks around and sees the sights, the people. There were cars, American cars. There were American military. There were sailors. There were American warships in the harbor. There were American liners of the American President Lines docked nearby.

Many, many ships berthing along the docks. They had a whole bunch of them, a whole row of docks. The port area, very busy, lots of cargo. And they finally-- we loaded whatever suitcases we had. The largest luggage was going to be unloaded from the hold later and then somehow stored for the time being. But there we were, just suddenly in this tropical country.

And the people, Filipinos, the Philippines was predominantly Catholic. With about, population 2% is Protestant. The Jewish community, of what we knew of it at that time, one has to point out that this ship we were on was loaded with Jews, fleeing refugees, most of whom were on their way to Shanghai, two more stops to go. And the people that got off in the Philippines were my parents and myself. And I believe there was one or two others that got off the ship in the Philippines.

So that the numbers of people landing in the Philippines, Jews escaping from Germany, Austria, anywhere else, was always very small. It was an American Commonwealth run by a American High Commissioner, at that time, Paul McNutt by name, later on followed by Francis B Sayre. And it had a government run by a elected president, Manuel Quezon, and the vice president Sergio Osmena.

They were promised independence at some point. But I will get to that a little later. Anyway, the first thing you see or you saw in the Philippines were the horse-drawn vehicles. There were two kinds, as I later found out. One was for passengers, which was like a two or three seater. And they called the carromatas. And then there were those that carried freight. They were a little larger, [? caritelas, ?] all drawn by one scrawny horse and lots of those.

And they would keep to the side of the road. Because they were obviously slower than a car would be on a highway or a roadway. But we got to their house. It was a nice house. They had a governess for their young daughter, who was about four years old at the time. And they had other servants. Servants were the thing in the Philippines. They were cheap and plentiful. After all, it was a country that had an economy that-- where they had more people than they know what to do with.

But you could tell that the country was run by people who were not Filipinos. They were wealthy families. But there were lots-- a huge Chinese population and an American, large American interests. So--

Now this is around March the 16th, '39. And where was their house in relation to the city of Manila? I assume it was in a suburb.

Their house was-- actually, I want to point out. We landed on March the 16th. It so happens, March the 16th was the date that Magellan also discovered-- landed in the Philippines, just by coincidence of course. But anyway, that's the date. And the house that these people lived in was not too far away. It was in one of the districts not far from Manila Bay itself.

Manila Bay in Manila is-- there is a boulevard, which runs along it called Dewey Boulevard, of course, at that time in honor of the Admiral. And it's a palm-lined throughway with nice benches and palm trees and walkways that must have run, oh, six or eight miles along the coastal portion of Manila Bay. And on one end was an area called the Luneta. That's where the Manila Hotel is located.

And then there was the other end that led more toward the south. And it is sort of two major local districts border the Dewey Boulevard. One is called Ermita. And the other is called Malate. And their house was somewhere in the Ermita area and amongst other houses and apartments that made up the city. And so we could actually walk from their house to this boulevard, which we did the very next day with the governess and this man's daughter, you know, to play in the boulevard area there, doing whatever.

Was this anywhere near the Pasig River?

No, the Pasig River runs through Manila. It is a river that empties into Manila Bay somewhat-- if one were to face Manila Bay from Manila, it would be toward the right or toward the downtown area. The Pasig River essentially separates the so-called business district from the, what then was, the residential district of Manila. And amongst the Pasig River are several main-- there's the main city electric power plant.

There are government buildings. There is Intramuros, which is an ancient walled city. There is also docks there for some of the smaller interisland ships that are docked on the Pasig River. So this was sort of a bit south of the Pasig River. It

was in the area where there is another large avenue which is called-- was called Taft Avenue, named after guess who.

And on Taft Avenue, it was located the Jewish, the synagogue, Temple Emil, named after Emil Bacharach. He was an American Jew who operated a transportation company in the Philippines, passenger transportation. They had these little [? gitneys ?] or Jeepneys which would take people, three or four people at a time, through the city. So that's why he was a major person in the community. And the community, of course, was founded by Americans who had immigrated, not immigrated, who had come to the Philippines mainly for business reasons.

So there we were our first few days in Manila. So we stayed with this sponsor of ours for about two, three weeks. Or I don't know, it was actually just a week. And then we moved into a small apartment in Manila. And my father began to look, see what he could do for a job. And he found one not long thereafter with an American Jewish businessman who was also in sort of office equipment business, which my father sort of knew about and knew relatively well.

And he worked. That's where he began. And I was, at that time being eight years old, I went to school. It was a private elementary school run by a woman, an American. And she had, oh, five or six classes. And so that's where I went. I spoke hardly any English. And that was the first thing I had to sort of adjust to. I'd had two years of school in Germany. And I forgot, they probably put me back a year, you know, because I just couldn't speak the language.

So that's where I went to school for about a year, about a year. And I left that school and went to another school thereafter for about a year and a half. That was called the De La Salle College. And the De La Salle College was a large institution run by Jesuits. There were a number of us Jewish kids who went there. And there we ran into the religious problem.

Recognizing it was a fully Catholic country, the Jesuits, of course, demanded everyone take religion, which is part of the curriculum. Although it varied among who the teacher was. Some excused those that were Jewish from taking part in the Catholic-- Catholicism, the catechism. Others were very insistent that you participate. And so that raised some problems. But they were excellent teachers.

Most of them stemmed from, well, most of them were German or Hungarian, American, English, a variety of nationalities. And there were also teachers, Filipino teachers or laymen teachers, in the lower grades. And I had one of those for a while. It was very good. And when the spelling bees came, why you would-- the things you could win was candy or a rosary. So you came home with rosaries occasionally after having one of those spelling bees.

But that was the nature of parochial school. And it was fairly inexpensive. That was probably one of the reasons I went there. And at that time, I began to meet people. Because all the Jews were part of one community. And Temple Emil was the center. And the rabbi was Rabbi Joseph Schwartz, who himself was a refugee, had landed in the Philippines in 1937 I believe with his wife.

He was a man of about 30 or so at the time, a young rabbi. And there was no cantor. So one of the older timers, an American who was able to do the cantorial work, would be doing that. Two of them, they take turns. We didn't get a cantor until we finally one arrived in a sort of strange way. He and his mother were Polish. And they were trapped in that famous situation at the Polish Corridor.

The Germans wouldn't let them back in. The Poles wouldn't want them back. So finally, they were able to get to the Philippines by some circuitous route. And the rabbi made it a point to go out with a pilot to welcome the passenger liners that would be coming in. He climbed the Jacob's ladder and talked to the people, because there was a lot of need for a rabbi for whatever reason on board these ships.

People had died on the passage. There were cases of welfare. There were all kinds of problems. So he would go board and talk to the people, as many as he could. And on this one occasion when he boarded, he discovered they had a cantor. So they immediately, you know, set to work. In the course of a day, got the cantor and his wife-- I'm sorry, not his wife, his mother, who only spoke Yiddish, off the ship, and he became the cantor of the Temple Emil of the Jewish Community. So we finally had a cantor.

The routine of welcoming the ships was common. We knew when the ships were coming in, which ships. All the Italian ships, of course, on the Lloyd Triestino and not only that, there were two German ships, the Scharnhorst, the Gneisenau, not the warships but the passenger liners who also plied that trade occasionally and had Jews on them, taking them to Shanghai. And sure enough, on one of them, we would always meet people, or my parents would meet people that they knew from the old country.

And sometimes we were able to get them off the ship for the day so that, you know, we could spend the day with them. And then they would go on to Shanghai. We met most of them again after the war in San Francisco or somewhere else. But that was one of the things. I remember one particular instance where the Conte Biancamano, the largest of the ships, docked. And there was a big welcoming group of local Jews.

And off the ship came one Herbert Zipper. He became quite well-known later amongst many circles. But I'll explain. He was a conductor. And he was born in Vienna, grew up in a sort of almost non-Jewish environment, but was arrested, taken to Dachau, subsequently to Buchenwald, and subsequently was able to get out of there because he, too, received a visa, an affidavit, from a woman whom he knew well back in Vienna who has since come to the Philippines.

And she was the director of the corps de ballet in the Philippines. And she got him in. And he came off the ship and kissed her hand, very Viennese style. And then subsequently became the conductor of the Manila Symphony Orchestra. And she was the conductor-- head of the corps de ballet. And they did operas and everything. I got to know him just vaguely, because my mother was a singer and sang in the orchestra choir.

And so occasionally, she'd take me to rehearsals. And I would listen to him conduct. It's interesting in this connection. Because in 1996, Herbert Zipper, then 92 years old living in Los Angeles, was honored by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. And an event or a movie, a film of his life, was played and also a book written about him called The Dachau Story was shown. And I met him again, at that time being a volunteer. And there he was.

And he didn't remember my mother by name. But he says, you know, if I'd see her, I would probably know who she was. But anyway, that's a going back-- or going forward quite a bit, number of years. So many people were able to leave Europe, of course, with these ships, get to Shanghai, that community grew to 25,000. Manila community grew to approximately 900 refugees.

And you add to that about 200 or 300 American and also Jews who were Sephardic, who'd lived in the Philippines a long time from the Spanish era and who lived there as merchants. So that was the Manila Jewish community. And our routine of going to meet the ships of course continued until the war broke out, the Pearl Harbor, December 7th, 1941.

But going back now to my childhood and, again, it was at ages 8, 9, 10, roughly speaking, I met a lot, of course, Jewish kids who were at the Hebrew school. We had a Hebrew school going. We went every Sunday. I was a very reluctant participant. Although I did get to be bar mitzvah during the Second World War. The Japanese occupied Philippines. But this is, again, going back to before the war, before 1941.

It was an active Jewish life. There were dances. There were youth get togethers. There was, of course, as I mentioned, the classes that were taught by the rabbi, by the cantor and other scholars, Jewish scholars in the community. We went to various schools. There was no Jewish school. As I mentioned, I went to this parochial school. Some of the women went to women's parochial school, schools like the Santa Scholastica which was one of those.

There was one school which was very inexpensive but very difficult to get into. Again, they favored Americans or favored British students. There was one school called The American School that was very expensive and was mainly geared toward Americans who were living in the Philippines. And most of them were fairly wealthy. Because they were in business. That was their main reason for being there.

The Filipinos would always wonder how come these white people, these Jews from Germany, Austria were so poor. Because, to them, anyone who was white was rich. Again, this is a cultural thing and that occurred. So they were always asking, how come we could not afford cars and more servants and what have you?

Frank, in these years before the war broke out, before Pearl Harbor and the Japanese occupation, what was your daily life like? You mentioned that you found an apartment. And your father got the job that he did. And I'm-- and you talked about poverty within the Jewish community.

Well, it was generally relatively routine. Much of it had to do with getting acclimated in the Philippines, the food, what you were able to obtain, native food. Like and there was a lot, of course, of imports as well. Apples and oranges were all imported. For example, butter was imported. Meats were imported. Because the native cattle was mostly water buffalo and so on, which we later on did eat.

But so it was just getting acclimated. And that-- I remember one major occasion, there was before the war a man, both Jewish, husband and wife, who had come to the Philippines long ago. They were, again, these also called old timers. They ran an enormous resort hotel restaurant complex, which people would stay over and which was quite expensive. Their son was bar mitzvah. And they had a bar mitzvah event with the outdoors one night, an enormous affair, 500, 600 people. And we were invited. He invited the whole Jewish community. So that was an interesting event that we all participated in.

As youth, we also, in this part of the group, we took tours out of town. We went down, oh, 20, 30 miles away to a place called Tagaytay for the day for a picnic. We went swimming. We had to be careful because jellyfish are in the area. But we did all these things. We did fairly normal things for a change. As I say, we went to school. We had breakfast, lunch, and dinner. And we socialized. We had people to the house.

It was always interesting to entertain or to meet with people that had just arrived, because you tell them the strange stories. For example, one night we had people over. And I don't know, we had another person there who was-- even had been there much longer. And one of the things you see when you sit in a room is you see little tiny lizards crawling around the ceiling. And that's sort of part of the scene, I mean.

And when people see them the first time, they get very upset. And you say, no, no, no, you have to-- the natives or the locals who've been there awhile will tell you, no, you have to buy these. Because they eat mosquitoes. And that's why, you know, they're very handy. But don't worry, occasionally one of their tails drops down into your soup. But not to worry about that. They, you know, you can fish it out.

Then there's the other story which is, when people first arrive there, they may go to a small place to eat. And they're served a bowl of rice and the rice is crawling with ants. And so they immediately put it aside. They won't touch it. Well, they come back a month later again to eat, and there's the same bowl again with all the ants. So they begin to fish out the ants. And then after that, they eat the rice.

About three months later, they come back. And, of course, you know what the end of story is. That bowl of rice is again served with the ants. This time, they take the fork and eat it, rice and ants and all. This is what is called acclimatization and getting used to the country. There are all kinds of stories of that nature. People who are used to walking fast in Europe, they acclimate. They began to do that in the Philippines. Oh, no problem, we're going to just zip along here.

Well, four, five months later, they began to slow down. The heat is oppressive. No home was air conditioned. The movies were air conditioned. So to cool off, occasionally, that's when we'd go to the movies. But the homes were not. They were screened hopefully to keep the mosquitoes out. We also slept under mosquito nets most of the time. But you did not have air conditioning.

So the heat was in the 90s all year round. There were only two seasons. One's the rainy season. One's the dry season, both hot. So these are things you had to get acclimated to.

What was hardest for your parents to adjust to, I'm wondering? And I'm also wondering if the Jewish life you had there was different than what you think your Jewish life would have been like if you had stayed in Berlin?

To me, I probably wasn't-- well, first of all in Berlin, during my experience there, it was a repression. When I was born, essentially, as far back as I remember to the time I left, so there was no open Jewish life in Germany. But in the

Philippines, there was. And the community did make a great effort to keep its young, the younger people and teens and so on, involved in Jewish life.

The holidays, everybody went to the synagogue Friday nights. We, of course, had the Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah, all the holidays. The cantor was marvelous who had come just before the war. He organized. He was really an expert in organizing young people's affairs. And he was an expert at piano singing and all that. He taught piano. So this-- and then there were other people who also were talented.

After all, you brought into the Philippines only a few but well disciplined and well educated and talented people. So they were able to offer things of that nature and as best they could. Most of them had difficulty finding work, sustaining work. Their standard of living was not high for many reasons, language reasons, skills. We had people there who were lawyers in Germany. Well, they couldn't practice law in the Philippines. It was impossible.

Those people who had studied technical, had technical backgrounds, were of course in demand. Because like a refrigeration engineer, we had one person there. And he immediately got a job. A chemist immediately was hired to develop research chemistry. The others were in the merchant class. They, too, eventually found things to do, either to open their own business, to work for others.

Many of the women worked in sales fields or whatever. Some-- we had physicians. And those that were allowed to practice, and most of them were allowed to practice, could practice, opened practices and did very well. There was always a shortage of good physicians. So the community, depending on their own skills and their own knowledge, did relatively well.

We had, of course, welfare problems, too. But the community banded together to take care of the cases. Eventually as I will describe also more later, one of the events in 1940 was the construction of a community home outside of Manila, which included several, about 10, 15, 20, acres, where they would house single people and young families, young couples, to work on the farm, work in agricultural environments, and sustain themselves in that manner.

This home was built and the land was given by the Philippines. And President Quezon and the president of the Jewish community, an American by the name of Alex Frieder, who owned a tobacco business, were the people who opened the home. And I was there with my mother as well as many others. And so, you know, these ceremonies of the opening of the Marikina Hall, as it was known.

And at that time, there were articles published in the Manila newspapers talking about the policies of President Quezon, about his opening of the Philippines as best as he could, being under the gun of the United States, to welcome Jews. There were plans to bring 10,000 Jews in, to settle them in Mindanao in the southern highlands. These plans were sort of blessed by the State Department. And one can go into great detail on that project.

But unfortunately-- but at times, things got to a certain point, it was too late. We were dealing 1940 now. And of course, by 1941, all of that was out the window. So but this home was opened and was served to keep these people employed. They also served also as a weekend--