

This is the fourth tape of an interview with Frank Ephraim for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interviewer is Nancy Alper. It's March the 20th, 1997. And this is side A of the fourth tape.

Yes, we were at the point where my father was working for this office machine company. And they had a store, a retail store, a very large one, they sold adding machines, typewriters, and things of that sort, also the very first public address systems with the microphones, old microphone types they had in those days.

Now his boss, the man who managed the store, was a German, as I mentioned. He had come ashore to the Philippines after the First World War. He was a radio operator. His name was Zifkind. That was his last name. Was sort of a tall man who almost looked like the fellow that is president of-- chancellor, president of Germany, Kohl. And he was a bachelor at the time, but he was importing his wife from Germany, a woman that he had known there. And she was going to come join him later, and she did. They were married.

However, that job went very well. He was in that job up until the opening guns of the full war, December 7. And it, of course, was an American company. And one thing was unique about the office was I recall, they built-- Zifkind's office was converted into an air conditioned office so far everybody wanted to go to meetings there. It was a small office he had. I remember going in there. And they showed me around. And it was air conditioned, one of the first times that they installed such a system.

In any event, my father worked there in sales and corporate sales or company sales, not just the walk-in retail sales. Since naturally, office machines were used by the businesses all over the place, and this was in the downtown business section of Manila. It was on a street called Dasmariñas.

But of course, here came the war. He did manage to get to the office after December 7, 1941. But it was not long until there was word that the Japanese appeared to be on their way to invading the Philippines, which they did. They landed, as history has shown, at Lingayen Gulf. I'm not certain of the day. It was sometime in December.

During that period, there was a lot of preparation. The American forces had established anti-aircraft installations all over, usually heavy machine guns. There was a lack of good anti-aircraft artillery. Everything was blacked out. There were patrols at night. There were all kinds of restrictions, naturally, that had to be followed. It was war.

So we still continued to live pretty much as we had before. Food, there was getting to be a little shortage, because, obviously, the ships were not coming in. There were no longer notifications in the shipping pages of the name of the ship that was going to be arriving, just it always would say a vessel. And it would give the approximate date of arrival, again, for security reasons. It was a large shipping port.

Well, the Japanese kept bombing, periodically, until we had heard of the landing at Lingayen. And then fighting on the ground began. We were not totally aware of what exactly was happening. However, we were not in school. So we were playing soccer, or football, as we called it, on the Dewey Boulevard, continuously almost every day.

And then one day my father came out to where we were playing and some other of the fathers or mothers of the kids that were playing, and because we hadn't noticed that provincial buses were coming down the boulevard. Manila had been declared an open city. That's to avoid its destruction and the killing of people, civilians. That was done by MacArthur.

Meanwhile, the military was beginning to pull out of Manila, to Bataan, where they would attempt to resist. But the Japanese were making great headway in coming, roaring down from Lingayen, down the valleys or whatever toward Manila. And we were beginning to get that kind of news.

We were getting word that women should not be wearing pants because the Japanese would play games. They would say, well, are you a man or a woman? And they being sort of traditionalists, and that was a word that was passed around, among other things.

As I said, one day, we were playing soccer, and these provincial buses-- provincial buses are the kind where there's a bus chassis, and then there are benches built across, holding people, and a roof. And you could enter the bus from the side for each bench. There was no middle passageway with a front entrance to the bus. They had different colors on them too, sort of fancy colors. And also people could sort of lie or squat on top where there was baggage on top of the bus. These were the provincial buses, take people to the province and back into Manila.

We saw those coming down. And we noticed, playing out, they seemed to be full of what looked like soldiers. But we weren't sure who they were, exactly. There was some suspicion. Anyway, our parents would come there and say, better come in, because the word is the Japanese are in some fashion appear to be entering Manila. And, yes, of course, then we realized later-- we saw some passenger cars with the Japanese flag and civilians in them-- that these were the beginnings of the entry into Manila of the Japanese forces.

Prior-- I want to just backtrack a little bit. As the United States Military forces were departing from the Philippines, there was, of course, law and order had broken down. So what they did was the policemen were no longer armed. They were just armed with sticks, it being declared an open city. The American forces decided to open up their major quartermaster supply depots because they couldn't haul the stuff back with them. So they opened it up for the populants to go in and take what they wished and walk off with it, which they all did.

So down the boulevard, marching from the port area where these warehouses were, were Filipinos and others, hauling stuff of all sorts, from hats to all-- there was a story of one time where one of them-- this is an anecdote-- I believe, it may have been true-- where they came back to their homes after hauling this huge box. And then they opened it and discovered there was a coffin with a corpse. It had been a person who had passed away that was being about readied for shipment back to the United States. And this of course was all in that dock area, and so naturally--

However, and unfortunately, this whole business of hauling stuff led to widespread looting of stores and eventually homes, so we decided in these Santa Monica Courts-- we had us a little community meeting-- to establish patrols made up of residents. And my father had the duty, I believe it was like from 11:00 to 1:00 in the evening, and he was to relieve another person or two others.

And so me being of the adventurous kind, my mother with great anxiety asked my father, gee, I'd like to come along. You know, just walking around the area there was no big deal. But, so we did that, it was dark, and then suddenly, we heard hobnailed boots on the concrete. And as we turned the corner, there was, I guess, a squad of Japanese. I mean, obviously, were not Americans. They wore the little caps, and long bayonets, and these hobnailed boots, I guess. And we saw them, they saw us.

So they stopped, and we stopped. And we saw put one arm up, and that's sort of a sign of peace, like from the old Indian tales. And they spoke no English, but they indicated that we should go home, go where-- so we went back to our apartment, our house.

Next morning, we noticed that all the, as I recalled before, there were passageways between these rowhouses, they were all blocked. There was a Japanese sentry or two on each end, so that you couldn't get in or out, because they had known, perhaps, ahead of time that that was a home for many Americans, and British, and Dutch, who were, of course, enemies. And there we were as well.

So what we did was we took out our old German passports with that red J in them. And it was sort of dark green passports, and we went up to this first sentry and showed him this passport. And, of course, the passport had this swastika on it, emblem with a swastika. So he didn't know, and he apparently called some other guy over who might have been the sergeant or whatever. And he looked at that. And then he said, ah, Deutsch-ka. The word Deutsche is German, and "Deutsch-ka" was the Japanese expression for a German. So they let us out. They let us back in. It was unusual that they would do that.

So those of us who had these crazy passports were able to get in and out most of the time. Interesting thing about the Japanese. I first saw them, extremely ill-clothed. They wore these, I guess not puttees, but it was sort of like long strips of cloth wound around their leg up to the knee, like in the First World War. And they wore shoes made of rubber where

the toe was separate from the rest. It was a very Japanese style of footwear.

And they did not each have a rifle, because when they changed guard, the rifle would stay with the person on duty. And the others would hand over the rifle to them. The only thing they wore was a bayonet and a cartridge case, two leather cartridge boxes on the front of the belt. And that was there. And they also had no steel helmets. They wore sort of either caps or a sort of a type of pith helmet in the shape of a steel helmet.

So they were extremely ill-equipped, it looked like any way. But they were a tough group. They were also mean. They were not extremely friendly, certainly not. And they were guarding, making sure no one got in and out. And a few days later, buses arrived and took-- and the word came down, the Japanese officers and interpreters, that all nationals of American, British, Dutch would have to board the buses to be taken to an internment camp at Santo Tomas University.

Prior to your sighting of the first Japanese soldiers, was the pier area burned? Was that part of what you described as this kind of wholesale looting and kind of chaos that was going on right before the Japanese came in?

No. They may have bombed some ships. I don't think the pier was hit. It might have been damaged slightly. We're not certain. I couldn't swear to that. The port area was bombed and some parts. And, yes, there were fires before the entry of the Japanese came in, but these were largely self-set fires. All the oil stocks were being burned.

And the strange thing was, I think the rainy season was on upon us, and all that oil smoke, black smoke up there, the rain would come down. And everybody had to run inside the house, because, otherwise, your clothes would be completely full of wet soot. And so I recall that.

And there were some explosions where they blew up certain installations. They blew up outside at a place called Parañaque, which was south of Manila. There may have been some destruction. But this was strictly to avoid stuff falling into the hands of the Japanese.

Do you remember your parents doing anything in particular to prepare for whatever was coming, that nobody really knew what was coming, like hoarding food or anything like that?

Yes. There was a good deal of that, because, of course, we knew that tough times were upon us and that. So my parents were old hands at that game. They were always ready to move, having had that experience all their life, much of their life. So cans of sardines were being gathered up and cans of corned beef and other things, rice, small sacks full of rice, and sugar. And things of that stuff we had sort of storage, it was in storage. And people would buy things, or whatever they could get hold of.

They would go to stores that had been half-looted. And the owners had come back, and they were selling out anything and everything they had. So we'd all go to these places and buy whatever canned goods, certainly, that we could obtain, because Philippines things will rot in a hurry, and so anything in cans, of course, would be useful. Cigarettes, another thing people bought as best they could. They knew that that supply would not last long.

So all these things were beginning to happen. And, of course, then suddenly, of course, the money changed. The peso and the dollar, anything like that was no longer valid currency, at least officially. And Japanese, what we called Mickey Mouse money, the Japanese army walked in with that money, and used it immediately. And it was required to be used. So now we had new printed pesos that had the Japanese government written on it.

And it wasn't long-- that devalued very, very quickly-- that pretty soon that to buy a half a pound of rice, it would cost you a thousand pesos, something of that sort. That began fairly soon, that was worthless money.

Do you remember actually seeing people being taken to Santo Tomas?

Oh yes. Well, these people that-- when my mother and those of us who were not being taken there, German-Austrian Jews or statements of what we were, we were there. And right by the boulevard where we had played soccer, that's where the buses were. And these people-- it took about four or five hours to load everybody, and buses would leave and

come back after taking the people to Santo Tomas, and load more.

So yes, we were there all day, watching and helping the people or whatever, and also storing things for them because after all, they had to leave their apartment. Now, they did exempt people, women who were pregnant or very small children, they didn't immediately take those people in, but the majority of people were taken. It was very sad day. You have, what, several thousand people in these apartments, and suddenly, oh, half, or more than half, no longer there. So it was very strange.

Do you remember seeing the Americans leave? What did you see, that you actually saw physically, that the Americans, either business interests, but primarily soldiers and armaments were going away?

Well, our couple next door, the Shellacs, he being the pilot and so on, it was the day before Christmas, 1941. And knocked at the door, and he says that they're leaving. And they have to go in order to go to Bataan. And there was a convoy or whatever. And all the airplanes had all been lost and what have you. And both were left. And they gave us some of their things and food that they wouldn't be taking along. And then they left, and then said goodbye, and that they hoped to be back. But--

The Filipino government disappeared, I assume. And there was this transition to the Japanese government. And I was wondering if early on during the Japanese occupation, you had to have dealings with whatever their governmental units were there.

Well, actually not. What happened was that the Quezon had left with MacArthur, to Corregidor, Bataan and Corregidor, as well as Osmeña, the vice president, and much of Philippine government. However, they left in charge a man by the name of Jose Vargas, who was then called chairman of the whatever committee that was to be in charge of the Philippines, to welcome the entry of the Japanese, whose general was Masaharu Homma, into Manila, the head of the Japanese Imperial Army.

He had two or three other people on this committee, but he was the chair. He had a man by the name of Aquino, and also I think it was Jose Laurel, but there were others. And he was called as Chairman Vargas. And he was in charge of the government. And the Japanese accepted that, temporarily, certainly, and considered him to be the quote, "head of government."

There was no Japanese civilian head of government, only the military. There were some civilians that were attached to the military and took care of whatever things, but all the services, utilities, and whatever management, police even, was under this Chairman Vargas.

So you dealt with those that you had dealt with before, essentially. There was no change of that nature. The Japanese, as I say, were strictly military occupation. And they ruled the roost. I mean, they had people that would tell him what to do or what limitations were and what restrictions there were. But if one would recall, the idea of the Japanese was to form a greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, which meant that their aim was to incorporate the Philippines and the Filipinos as part of their economic world, social and culturally as well.

So it's that direction that they were looking at, rather than subjugation, necessarily. Oh, they used subjugation and atrocities and everything else as means to get there. Nonetheless, the overall aim was that. It was anti-white, anti-foreigners, anti-American, anti-British, anti-European, et cetera. But they were trying to befriend the Philippines.

So that was the thing they-- and in fact, they wanted the schools to open up that they were only taught in Tagalog and not in English, to give the Filipinos an identity of their own, rather than having to rely upon another language.

So but the Filipinos were the kind of people that were very fairly thoroughly Americanized and would always say, even throughout the war, talking about the future, when ours come back, meaning the Americans. So they never made too many friends. And a few. They did manage to, of course, get a few adherents, but the minority.

What do you remember about the radio stations changing, the newspapers, and people gathering in or around your

apartment or within the Jewish community to talk about what was going on?

Yes, there was a lot of that. Of course, we kept visiting one another. The temple remained open. We continued to have services. Our American co-religionists, many or most were in Santo Tomas. A few had remained out for various health reasons, or some of the women or children were still there.

But, of course, the main people were no longer there. They were in Santo Tomas, as were others who were not Americans, who were of Polish background, and later on, they were taken in, and Romanian, and they were later on. As these countries, they became known as enemies to the Japanese, they were interned as well. I remember several people that had that citizenship and were there.

However, the community, as usual, stuck together early on, anticipating one incident that occurred when the Japanese first visited the temple. It was a detachment of the Kempeitai, which is Japanese intelligence service, military intelligence. And they visited. And the story was told to me-- I was not there-- was that they came in, apparently, with this photograph of a rabbi, an old man with a big beard. And they apparently must have picked that up somewhere as part of their intelligence work, and they were looking for this rabbi, a person who looked like that.

And here appeared this 36-year-old young fellow, always sporting a yellow tie, that was his thing, always wore a yellow-- it was white suit, that's what you wore on the Philippines-- and this yellow tie. And he said, I'm the rabbi. And in fact, he related the anecdote. He was there, and he always talked about it a lot. And they looked at the picture and looked at him. They weren't certain if this guy was telling the truth. But he eventually convinced them that, yes, he was the rabbi, and he was the religious leader.

And they said, well OK. And they said, well they would be covering the services here. They would have people that would attend. That was their procedure, and that's what they were going to do, and did. Every Friday night, these two guys, Japanese in civilian clothes, would be sitting in the synagogue in the back, with the books open, reading, presumably-- we don't know for sure whether they read Hebrew or not, might have. And they were there, never created any kind of fuss or anything, simply sat there, and observed, and listened.

So the notion was that if there were a gathering of people who were suspect in any way, however tenuously, they were going to be there to make sure that nothing arguably subversive was going on.

Precisely. This was certainly one of their-- after all, again, we go back to the fact we were a white community. This was not within the range of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere. We were not necessarily enemies, but we were certainly not friends. And they, of course, knew these Kempeitai, or the Japanese higher up hierarchy, they knew fairly well the fact that the German Jews or Austrian Jews were here because they were kicked out, or left Nazi Germany, their ally. So that, of course, made us suspect, definitely.

Things got a lot worse later on. This was the beginnings. And, remember, the beginnings were they were trying, at least partially, to befriend rather than confront.

So people in intelligence in the Japanese army, or people who were officers higher up, did have an awareness of the difference between Germans as a category and German Jews as another category?

They must have, because of their activities. There was a good-sized German non-Jewish community in the Philippines. And as I mentioned, my father's old boss was one of them. There were many of them were old-timers, who when they heard what was happening in Nazi Germany, were quite shocked, this, and what's going on. And they were very friendly to the German Jews and Austrian Jews, speaking the language. There was no animosity whatsoever.

In fact, we knew one another, not socially necessarily, but certainly on a business level. And they had a German club. We did not, of course, go to that. There was a German consul and all that. We did not have much to do with these people either.

But there were amongst them a small number who were fairly good Nazis, and who, essentially, went along with the

Hitler movement and also their theories. And they, I believe, at one time or another would make contact with the Japanese, being great allies, and inform them of, hey, you guys aren't really-- hey, look at all these Jews here. Japanese never took an action against Jews.

There was in the newspapers, at about a year or two into the war, there were occasional articles, written either by Germans or by somebody, that suggested that perhaps the Jews should wear also a different color armband, because anyone that was, for example, interned and was let out for temporarily, would wear an armband of a certain color.

Red was Americans, and they had a sort of symbol on it, the chi, which is sort of the symbol for American. They had to wear that while they were walking around streets. Some wore yellow, some wore a pink, some wore a-- different nationalities would wear a different color. And what was for the Jews, they were suggesting, maybe it was the Jews, they were suggesting, yeah, the yellow one. I'm not certain.

It, of course, never came to pass. By that time, the war was into 1944, and the Japanese were quite busy with other things, that they could not be bothered with a small group of people. However, the Japanese were, of course, extremely suspicious of any whites. And we, as I will perhaps go on a little bit more later, they arrested a number of the Jewish community from time to time, on the suspicion of having shortwave radio, which was one thing you were not allowed to have. You had to turn in your shortwave radio.

If it had the shortwave system in it, that had to be dismantled, taken out, or actually had to be turned in. You were not allowed to listen to anything but the local radio, to avoid any kind of knowledge about what was going on outside. So we were largely isolated. We knew sort of what was happening. The newspapers did report certain things, but, obviously, they reported it from a standpoint that was totally untrue in most cases.

I recall the invasion of Europe, Normandy, was talked about, a small item in, what, the eighth page of the local newspapers, saying there was an attempted landing in France, which was repulsed with heavy casualties on the Allied side. OK, that was their D-day Normandy description. And that went on for months, till one time it mentioned about there was fighting in and around Paris. So by that time, you sort of knew that things were--

However, we did have shortwave. We did have that. From the Santa Monica Courts, we moved to-- we had to get out of the Santa Monica Courts. The Japanese took over that whole system because it was kind of a neat place for them to quarter their officers, junior officers. So everybody had to move out of there. So we moved into a house on-- I forgot the street's name. Could've been the [INAUDIBLE]. These were favorite streets. It was a bungalow. We shared it with this family that lived across the street from us, across from us at the Santa de [PLACE NAME].

And we also brought in another man, a bachelor. His name was Pollock, and he was an intellectual type of guy who was an accountant. And we lived in that house, two families and a bachelor, for quite some time, until one point-- my father, as I mentioned, had worked for this American office machine company. Naturally, that went out of business or just was closed because of the fact it was Americans, taken over.

Zifkind, the boss, went into some other business. After all, he was a well-known businessman. And so did my father. What they all did at the time was-- and my father being a trades type person who knew import, export, that kind of thing-- went into what was crudely known as the buy and sell business. And his specialty was hardware, nuts and bolts and things like that, which he would buy and sell in large lots to industrial concerns.

And the way it worked was, these were all leftover things from the American era before the war. And he had a little office on the street, also Dasmariñas, downtown. And he shared it with this other fellow who was into bottles, glass bottles. They would sell big lots of glass bottles, to put in all kind, pills, whatever. And again, these things were no longer made. This was just the leftovers, things that were left from before the war.

And they would keep selling it to the next person, and the next person would keep selling it to the next person, and then it would sell the round, the round, the round. Sometimes, over a year, it would never move from the warehouse. It was sold on paper and bought on paper. And almost like this kind of large scale buys and selling, till eventually it might have been sold to a Chinese or somebody, and who might eventually have sold it to the Japanese, maybe. But everyone

made their profit on the selling, because the value would keep going up.

What was the purpose of that, to indirectly get it to the Japanese?

Well, the purpose, basically, was to make a profit on every time you bought. You bought it for price A, thousand, whatever, and you sold it for \$1,500, and then you might see that same thing come around again. By now it was \$3,000, then you sold it for \$3,500. And round and round, it went. There was always a buyer.

Because, eventually, see, the Japanese were, of course, very interested in buying or acquiring all this stuff, as were the Chinese, anybody who had something that they wanted to bottle or to build, of nuts and bolts and what have you, they would be looking for this. But it would be hard to find. And the price would be extremely high. It was high because it went around the ring so many times.

However, people were able to make a small profit off of it, or a large profit, depending, and thus able to make a living, which he did for two years in the hardware field. And other people did in the pharmaceutical field, books, any kind of goods, textiles, construction equipment, machinery, whatever, because that's how they managed to make a living.

So the Japanese, through other people, or with their own people, were not actually doing any manufacturing then. And is that because most of the things that were in the Philippines were being imported from the United States, and there was very little industrial work going on to begin with?

That is largely correct. Most things were imported. There were some things that were made in the Philippines, but there was limited. The Philippines was largely known for a producer of rice from its rice fields, abacá, which is hemp, Manila rope, and paper goods, and also for this sort of copra, which is coconut meat. That's coconut meat taken out of a coconut and then dried. That was made into special oils.

A lot of basis for our foods these days, and that time or other, whatever materials was copra, which was shipped out in large batches in the ships. So these were these large industries that were available, and gold was, of course, another commodity that was mined in the Philippines.

Manufacturing was limited to woven things-- hats and baskets, and things like that. And, of course, there was a substantial other agricultural business, water buffalo, and they had fish, a fish industry. But this was basically for home consumption. And, of course, the Japanese dug into all that. They came with nothing, brought in nothing, and equipped themselves in the Philippines in a big, big way.

Leather boots for the troops, the Filipinos became adept at making these leather covers, handle covers for these Japanese samurai swords. And the thing to do for a Japanese officer was to have a special leather cover for the big, long handle of his samurai sword, big item. Things of that nature, the Japanese took everything there was to take. Of course, all vehicles were immediately impounded. There was no gasoline.

Bicycles, of course, then became the vogue. Bicycles were stolen at a horrendous rate. I had a little bicycle, my father had a bicycle. My mother never learned to ride. But we rode all over the place on our bicycles. And that was the mode of transport. Our doctor had a bicycle, which was run by a little alcohol engine, a little thing attached to the rear of a wheel. And he would put around the area with this bicycle. In those days, of course, doctors would still visit patients at home.

One incident, for example, during the-- well, let me go back. From this little house, bungalow that we shared with this other family and the bachelor, we then moved to a much larger house. It was in a court, and it was on Dakota Street. And you entered the-- there were six houses which were identical. They were very large. They had long porches, both on the main and on the upper level, and then had bedrooms, a kitchen, and all that stuff. It was a big house.

We moved there, it must have been 1942 or 1943. I guess it was '42. And was this little court on which these six houses stood. The first two were right on Dakota Street. The other four were in back, and you entered them through this small court, which was made of concrete driveway. And in the back of that court were six garages, where people actually used

to have cars.

And across from us was a house like ours. And it was occupied by an American, whose name was Wilson. And he was interned, so he decided-- and he owned one of the garages. And we had a garage, but, of course, no car. There was nothing in the garage except just junk. And he decided if we would take his furniture and move it into our garage, plus a few other things, plus also look after his senior house boy-- this was a man who was just not a house boy, he could cook. He was his cook and everything, the family.

Well, he was interned. He was taken by the Japanese and interned. And we held all his furniture. And soon other people moved into the house across the way, because it was a rental. And these six houses we stayed in until the liberation, in 1945. However, lots of things occurred while we were living in that house.

This is the second side, side B, of the fourth tape of an interview for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, of Frank Ephraim. The interviewer is Nancy Alper. It's March 20, 1997. Frank, we're talking about the period during the early part of the Japanese occupation of the Philippines in general, and Manila, particularly.

Yes, there's one sort of short story, this is about about lizards. Remember, we talked about geckos, some kind of a lizard before. This is a different one. People who had just arrived in Manila and were visiting other people, and of course some of them were visiting with us in our house, would sit down in what was a living room, and these rattan chairs that just about everyone had, or a couch, with very colorful pillows.

And sometimes people would sort of look up at the ceiling. And, suddenly, they would really jump, practically off the chair, because what they saw was little tiny lizards. They were about like 3 inches long, with tails and everything, chasing one another. There might have been two, three, or four, even half a dozen, in raised parts of the ceiling, usually toward the edge.

And they said, my god, look up there, lizards. Said, oh, no, no. You don't have to worry about those. One has to actually-- we would joke, we'd say, you actually have to buy these little lizards because they're there for the sole purpose of catching mosquitoes, that's what they eat. And so everybody has lizards in their house for that purpose. And they would sort of just shake their heads, being very surprised. After all, this was rather different from what they were used to back in, say, Germany or Austria.

And then we'd also tell them that you have to be kind of careful when you're at a dinner or something, and there's a plate of soup, and suddenly these lizards shed, and the tail will drop into your soup. And it's something to be aware of and this and all, that not be surprised, because it does happen. Well, that took a lot of people by surprise, of course. But like anything else, people do adjust to that, which brings us also to other animals, which I'd sort of forgotten to mention about, one's first impression in the Philippines.

And that you'll be sitting in the room, and they usually had wooden floors, and the homes had a lot of windows for air to come in and so on. But, suddenly, here was this spider. And mind you, the spiders are not little fellows. They're about the size of your hand. It comes crawling across the floor at a high rate of speed.

People would jump out of their chairs, to run like crazy. But then, of course, we were told later not to worry. Those are very natural creatures. These spiders, too, eat insects. And they're harmless, they're not poisonous, not tarantulas. They're just very friendly little fellows, and they're as scared of you as you are of them.

The other thing is and everything seems to be the sort of large size in the tropics, like a cockroach that we see. Well, cockroaches in the Philippines run up to about 2 inches long in some cases, in most cases. And there are obviously large hordes there because of in the case of rotting garbage. And then there are flying cockroaches.

We once sat at the table, and the screen was either broken or open, and suddenly this thing comes flying in. It's a flying cockroach, wings and all, makes a loud noise and crashes into the wall and stuff like that. But these are the sort of animal kingdom that you come across in the tropics.



In addition to these wild animals, what was happening on the street after the Japanese occupied Manila, in the sense of theft or chaos of any kinds that affected your family's life?

Well, the Japanese were, again, a very different kind of people. And here, of course, we were mostly dealing with military and Japanese residents of the Philippines who were working often with the military. And in some cases, some of our Jewish friends had been in business and knew Japanese businessmen, personally. And so at times, this was a fairly friendly exchange.

However, the Japanese army was a rather ruthless organization. And the greatest problem on the streets was not so much theft, but fear. They would suddenly stop people, or round up people to help carry sandbags, or to help in some construction project, or to search you, or to request your ID. And they would have no compunction about beating people. This is one of their big things, was the beating up people. Slapping them was a big thing.

Also, if there was a guard somewhere, wherever-- and they had lots of Japanese soldiers on guard, always with fixed bayonets. That was a characteristic, the bayonet. And if you had to bow as you passed the guard, regardless of who you were or what you were doing. You stopped by and gave a short bow. This is the equivalent of saying hello or shaking hands in Japan. And they expected that of everyone. Now, if you didn't do that, they'd call you back and make you do that, or so they'd even slap you if you did not.

So there was this kind of atmosphere. It was a sort of very unique thing. Now, Filipinos are a basically friendly people. And they found it rather embarrassing, certainly, to be slapped or being scolded for not saluting or greeting a Japanese sentry, whom they thought, well, what the heck, he's just a sentry. But that was one of the characteristics of the open streets.

And then, of course, anything could be confiscated --and I'll come to that a little later-- but any form of transport, later on, including bicycles and push carts, were confiscated by the Japanese army for their own use. But initially, of course, all cars were confiscated. The only thing that was running was Japanese military traffic, transit buses, and so on.

And then, eventually, or at some point fairly early on in the occupation, they converted gasoline engines to gas engines. And the gas would be obtained by grinding up charcoal in sort of boilers that were attached to the vehicle, and then be lit like a furnace. And the gas from that concoction would be fed into the engine. And that would be a propellant, that would be a fuel. So they had this smoking gas, charcoal burner type vehicles, mainly buses or larger cars, roaring around the city. It was a lot of smoke coming out from everywhere.

Given what you've just described about what was going on, on the streets, I'm wondering how it affected your family's decision, your parents' decision, about how they wanted you to behave, since you describe yourself as a young person who was kind of out doing your own thing and having a good time and being adventurous. I'm wondering if they imposed on you a different way of behaving.

Well, they certainly reacted to the things that were happening. And, of course, as anyone would, they were more careful. And what you tried to avoid was having to walk by a sentry. So all those streets where there were sentries for buildings or installations or what have you, you try to avoid that, if possible, or be as far away from it as you can.

In those occasions, where indeed you had to do that, well, you just gave the guy a quick bow, and that was the end of it. Most of the time, he gave a little bow back, and that was it. Now, the only danger was, as I mentioned, we lived in this house, which was one of six large houses in a court type layout off Dakota Street in the District of Malate. It was 1942 or so by then, '43 perhaps.

Japanese patrols would come around, again, seven or eight men with a sergeant who had a-- or an officer who had a samurai sword, and the soldiers all had fixed bayonets. And they would enter the houses, and they would go in and want to search. And their main thing was to search for shortwave radios or anything that would in any way have a negative effect on what it is that they were interested in doing.

So the other thing, of course, was my father being of an age where they could use him for whatever, would always

attempt-- if it was a weekend, and if he was in the house, he would go into his favorite hiding place. There was a place under the stairs, sort of around the corner, where it would be very difficult to find anyone inside the house. But they would always want to look at the cupboards and at closets.

And most particular, we had this huge steamer trunk. It's the kind of trunk, which is large enough in which you can hang dresses and clothes without folding them. And it was above 6 feet long, about, oh, 5 feet, 6 feet high. And it opened from the top as well as from the side. You could actually live in there if you wanted to, it was that big. That was a steamer trunk that we had brought with us from Germany.

It was the largest piece of luggage we had. And that they would want us to open every time because they felt if anything was hidden, it might be in there. But we did have a shortwave radio that we used, and it was hidden, again, where my father used to hide, or way in the back, in the middle of the house, behind a small staircase or under a small staircase. And, occasionally, we would pull it out in the middle of the night because you could then pick up a broadcast from San Francisco.

A man by the name of William Winter would broadcast. And then, strangely enough, we ran into him sort of, after the war, coming to this country. He was broadcasting news and news analysis in San Francisco on television. So we met up with the man. We didn't meet him personally, but saw him after having heard him all this long distance during the war of '42, '43.

But we were very extremely careful with the unit, and as were most people, because if you were caught with that, that was not a very pleasant thing. Because people were picked up for that and brought into a place called Fort Santiago. It was an old Spanish fortress, which was used as a prison. It had a dungeon, dungeon cells.

And there were people from the Jewish community, a man who once lived with us as a border by the name of Schott, S-C-H-O-T-T, I believe. And he had come from Germany, was a bachelor. And somehow he had gotten caught up in some of that, or had gotten caught up in transmitting messages or doing something for the so-called underground. They arrested him, was taken to Fort Santiago, developed apparently an infection, and perished, died from that in this fortress, on the Kempeitai, Japanese secret police.

And there was another couple, name was Julius Berger. And they too in some fashion-- they had two sons, and somehow also were involved in such clandestine activities. Also taken in. They, I believe, survived, released eventually. But, again, other people, of course, did not make it out of Fort Santiago. This was known as their secret police headquarters, and with the dungeons, and many people there, of course, perished under their treatment, interrogation, and what have you.

So this was always these little signals. The Jewish community, naturally, had suffered as a result because these people were associated with the community. And--

When you say suffer, what do you mean? And I also wanted to ask you why your father was willing to take the risk of keeping a shortwave radio.

Well, it was just one of those things that you wanted to stay in touch, you wanted to know what's happening, because the news you heard on the local radio or read in the paper were all propaganda, falsehoods, and things of that nature. So this was just the way he-- and he liked radio. This was one of his things in early life.

And he felt a hidden, a little tiny radio, as small as what was available, would not be discovered. So he took that risk. But many people did. It was not unusual. Because they did search, but it's difficult to search and find, I mean, particularly if things are well hidden. And they get tired, too, of searching. I mean, you have a patrol doing that all day long, going into houses, after a while, they just as soon leave. That's it. So we banked on that, and that turned out to be OK.

And you mentioned the suffering of the Jewish community because of the actions of a few. Could you elaborate on that?

Well, what began to happen was that the people who would be observing the services, they would begin, I believe, at some point putting on some restrictions on the rabbi and the community as to, first of all, their travel. We were not allowed to leave the city. That was one thing. The other was that we began, of course, to have people in the community that needed help, single people, sick people, old people, people who were ill.

So, eventually, we managed to gather some of the elders of the community, which included my father, put them on the board. They created a board. Remember, now, the Americans, who were running things earlier before the war, were no longer around. They were interned or had left. So there was very little resources, combined resources in the community. So they had to figure out a way to take care of the people who needed help.

And so they rented a huge home somewhere not too far from Manila, where all these people went to, were taken care of, lived. And us young guys, we were taken out there for agricultural purposes. We had to plant gardens. And we planted peanuts, and we planted vegetables. And so we were under supervision of a guy who was really a butcher back in the old days. But he knew how to do planting and things. So we did that many times so that they could grow their own food, to some extent, of course.

But there was no assistance of whatever from any governmental authority. There was so-called rationing, which meant that you couldn't really buy anything. Things like butter were gone. Margarine was beginning to be made out of coconut oil, but that too began to be very expensive. The community, of course, got no aid whatsoever from any authority. So being white, being Jewish, and having, perhaps because of some of the incidents that may have occurred with some other members of the community that were caught supporting or helping the Allied cause.

As you may recall, there were many good friends of ours-- Jews and others-- who had been taken to the internment camp at Santo Tomas. There too, they were not fed. They were beginning to be very, very starved. And there were members of the Jewish community who would take bicycles, load it up with stuff in the back as much as they could, and pedal out to Santo Tomas, and drop stuff over the wall. And that was kind of risky. And there were some that were caught at that. And that was also, again, one basis for taking them into Fort Santiago.

And then the other incidents, although not directly related to Jewish community, American prisoners were often brought into the city to work. And not just Jews, but all the Filipinos, they all tried to help them-- throw food at them, or whatever, because they obviously knew they were not being fed or treated well in the camps, in their prison camps.

So the Japanese soon began to be very suspicious of all-- certainly, of all the whites and the Jewish community amongst them. So in that sense, we began to feel the brunt of their hate and their action and their restrictions. And being a community of a fairly small size, we were 800,000, 900,000 at the most, and trying to keep the community together. We had services regularly. And we had all the things that attended to services.

But we were beginning to have people who had difficulties in coping, and certainly in feeding themselves. There was really no jobs except for a few people who had retail stores, or people who did other businesses, or people who performed certain services. So that was always great difficulties for a certain number of people. So the rest of the community had to pull together to help them out.

What was happening to the temple community at that time? You're saying services continued. And did your family go to the services?

Oh, yes, we regularly went every Friday night, certainly to the services and the high holidays, because that was a sort of a center of life, both the meeting of the community and for the services, the rabbi's sermons, and the cantor. It was a small community, so everyone knew pretty much one another. And we kept up with what was happening to everyone, and what happened in various areas of town, and what people were doing.

So that was, of course, a very important thing to do was to attend services. We did that every week, plus the holidays. And the beginning in 1943, February 1943, I began to take studies with the Cantor Cysner for my bar mitzvah, which was to be held a year from there. I was actually, I started these on my birthday February 19, 1943. The bar mitzvah was scheduled for February the 26th, 1944. And so that was my beginning for studies of the bar mitzvah at that time.

We were living then in this house on Dakota Street. And there were other events that occurred. There was one year, I think it was 1943, was a humongous flood. The whole city was flooded. Apparently, during the typhoons, which occur there often that period and certain parts of the year, one of the dams broke. Or I believe one of the causes was that they had not, what is it, plowed up the riverbed, kept it deep enough, or whatever. Then the dikes broke or whatever happened, and suddenly the whole city, Ermita, Malate, they all flooded.

And you woke up the next morning, and you saw these little boats that they use in the Philippines, floating down the street. People were in them. These little boats were called bangkas. And they're little outriggers. They'd sometimes have either one outrigger on one side, or two outriggers on each side. They're made out of logs, are wood shaped, cigar shaped. And they're used for fishing and whatever. But those were being used to transport people around.

And it so happened on that night, it was a very traumatic experience, really, there was a couple with their son, who was a year younger than I, living next door. He was German. She was English. They had fled from Hong Kong, where he was in business. They were not Jewish. And they'd moved into the house next door, same house we had, next door. And he was an avid chess player. And they taught me how to play chess, which was great, because in the war, not much to do.

But his wife, apparently, was ill, I believe, with cancer. And then the night of the flood, she died. And so this was a tremendous problem because a physician had to come. And he made it, swam part of the way, and then walked through the water. And then, of course, all the other things that had to be taken care of. One of those horse-drawn vehicles, which are pretty high, came. And the boy stayed with us for the next day or two.

But it was kind of a very-- I remember it, clearly today, what happened. And so that was one of the occurrences, that particular year, the year of the flood. And it took several days for the water to decline. And, finally, they had all kinds of problems, naturally, after that. And also two ships that had been sunk in the middle of the bay were washed ashore, large ships. And they were on this boulevard.

One was smack into the retaining wall, and one was behind it, sort of holding it in there. They had been, as I say, they had dredged up with such tremendous waves. So that was also an interesting sight to see and see what they did with it.

Did you or your family have any kind of personal contacts or personal information about the underground or the-- that's not the right word. The group of the clandestine resistance that was going on at the time that, as I understand it, some Jews participated in?

Well, the participation was different. Every Filipino, practically, was a member of the guerrillas after the war. This guerrilla was the term for these units. They were in existence, several formal or guerrilla units. One was Marking's guerrillas, fairly well-known. And there were some other units. And from time to time, the Japanese would indeed apprehend or somehow capture Americans, soldiers, officers who had stayed behind up in the mountains that were with these units.

In Manila, being, of course, a city, many people, I suppose, performed intelligence duties in the sense that they could relay information through channels back to the United States or to the United States Armed Forces. One instance which actually occurred much later in the war, during already the return of the United States, was-- my closest involvement in that sort of thing was ships were bombed-- Japanese warships were bombed.

And we were a living, again, on Dakota Street. And across the street from us, a little down the street from us, was a huge development of stucco homes, which were painted pink. And the Japanese had taken over that whole section, must have been about 50 houses, and converted it into a red light district for the Japanese Navy, enlisted and chief petty officer rank. So that was a lot of activity going on there at night.

Well, that one night, American planes came and bombed the Japanese ships in the harbor. And the next thing you know, friends of mine, after that bombing, it was dark, and we went down the street, and there was some wooded areas. And we saw where the Japanese were being-- where sailors were being taken, apparently, ashore and taken to these red light

district homes.

Apparently, everything was converted into a sort of field hospital overnight, using the girls as help. And the Japanese, as I say, were dragging, hauling what looked like sailors half-drowned sailors. And what we did was we looked around to see the caps that the sailors wore, because the Japanese Navy, they have hats, also of the old-fashioned type, on the rim of which is the name of the ship in Katakana, the Japanese simpler-- it's a script which consists of 76 characters, which we learned to read. And so we could tell which ship they were from.

And so we memorized some of the names we saw. And then we knew people who presumably had connections with the so-called underground. And we told them the next day or so, we saw cap with that name on it. And they said, oh, thanks. That's great information. Or course, when we passed that on, all the way up through the various channels by radio, they will know which ship was sunk or hit, because, obviously, those sailors came from the ships that were hit.

So that was the sort of, that kind of thing, really not very highly exciting, more interesting than anything else. But there were other people who were more active. There were people who did more work in, again, intelligence gathering. I don't know to what degree.

In many ways, the guerrilla movement was way overrated. They did maybe 1/10 or less of what they claimed they did, since the resistance of Japanese was extremely tough and highly dangerous. Besides, you were on an island. There was no ways to escape. About the only thing that occurred that we did know about was that occasionally an American submarine would come close to the island, or one of the islands, and drop off people, or to pick up people, or also drop off some materials and some magazines.

Because I did see a Life magazine dated 1943, which could only have come in through such a clandestine source. Obviously, there's no other way it could have come into the country. So, yes, there was this sort of intelligence type of resistance. The guerrilla forces were more active later on when they actually confront the Japanese during the liberation.

They were also, of course, active in some of the southern islands, Mindanao, and in the mountains of Luzon, where they probably may have ambushed Japanese, who were looking for them, and things of that nature. Full-scale war battles were not fought on the guerrilla level. It was primarily intelligence work that was conducted, and successfully-- locations and so on.

But you heard about people in the Jewish community, through the Jewish grapevine, who were doing this?

Yes. Yes, there were a handful who did some of these things, who passed information on. Mainly, that was it. Spying is what you'd call it today. They would pass on information about the troop dispositions, locations of troops, the Japanese troops, size of the force, the so-called order of battle type of information that was being gathered always.

Were there any members of the Jewish community that you know of who went out of their way to make friends with the Japanese?

None that I knew of. There might have been some that eventually had some business relations with other Japanese, stemming perhaps from their earlier relationship. But there were none that you would call collaborators. No. In fact, there were very few collaborators in the Philippines, period. Those few Filipinos, they were relatively rare, that were real collaborators.

The only ones, of course, were Germans-- a few of the Germans, not all of them, certainly not-- who could be considered collaborators. They did not find too many friends in the Philippines, the Japanese, no.

And is it correct that during 1942 and '43, you were not going to school at all?

No, I did go to school. When the Japanese entered Manila, which was on New Year's Day, 1942, that was the night of the hobnailed boots and the day after the buses that we saw on the boulevard. About a year went by, say, from that period, before I went back to school and went back to the La Salle College, where I spent the next two years during the

war.

And what they did in La Salle college was this, they interned all brothers who were of American, British, or Allied background, or birth, and put them in a place outside of the city, where they were interned. The brothers who were of German, Hungarian, or whatever, more Axis backgrounds, they allowed them to continue teaching.

But it was a weird thing because all these brothers were pretty much brothers, and they were-- but that's how they had to operate. They too were under strictures. And they continued their teaching as they had before, taught religion, taught mathematics, and they taught all the things they were allowed to, except the Japanese rule was that everyone had to learn Tagalog, the native language, and Japanese. So they had classes in Tagalog and Japanese.

And quite obviously, a Filipino, one of the Filipino teachers taught Tagalog. Now, Japanese was a different story. We had a brother who was a big tall bald-headed man. I think he was of German origin. And he was always called Brother Buko. And the word buko has an origin, it is the Filipino name of a raw coconut that is green on the outside. They figure a bald man, that's sort of what they call him.

They have another name for baldness, which is also a funny name, but this was Brother-- he was always commonly called Brother Buko, but his real name I forgot now, Brother something else. But he decided, and Jesuits, of course, that's their field-- studies and education-- he sat himself down, apparently, and began to learn Japanese. And from what he learned, he taught and did it very well. So we were there taking Japanese from Brother Buko. And it was highly interesting. And so that's how we learned Japanese.

Studies were conducted in English, plus history was not allowed. Instead, we had to learn current events. Oh, geography was not allowed as well. We had to learn current events, Japanese-style. And they provided the curriculum for that current events, learning all about Japanese politicians, Japanese politics, structure of Japanese-- political structure, and all their various current affairs that were going on, the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere idea.

And also we had to learn a course in health. And the big Japanese thing was calisthenics. Everybody had to go out at lunchtime and do exercises, Japanese-style, all these sit-ups, push-ups, whatever they did. And there was a radio program that was designed specifically for that purpose, broadcast every day. It was called Rajio Taiso. Rajio Taiso, it was a radio program or station that offered the Japanese-style programs and the calisthenics classes once, twice, or three times a day.

And you could see people on top of office buildings and during lunchtime, they're doing this exercises and stuff. So they instituted this sort of thing. The Japanese themselves did it. They too had their troops out there, and they were doing the same business. Yeah, so this was part of their culture that they wanted to convey and convert us to.

Did they come around and visit the La Salle University the same way that they were visiting the synagogue or any other place to keep track of what was going on?

Oh, yes. Yes, they had people in civilian clothes or military that would come around, mostly civilian clothes, check the place out. It was not too obvious, because they didn't come every day. But, yes, indeed, I believe at one point they even had an office in that building for whatever purpose. But, yes, they would check the brothers out, they would check the school out, oh, yeah. That was part of the action.

And how often were you going to study for your bar mitzvah?

I believe I was going once a week. I would go to the Cantor Cysner's house. He lived with his mother. And I would study. And the idea for me would be to read the Torah section for the day, for the week, I'm sorry, and the Haftorah, which is the longer prayer thereafter. And, of course, this all had to be learned in the style and in the song, processed the way it is meant to be.

And so I began to study that. And was scheduled to be studied for a year till I was ready for the bar mitzvah in 1944. So that's what happened. The cantor also at one point taught piano. And so I took that. But since we didn't have a piano at

home, I couldn't practice. So it didn't last very long.

Were you still, or were the children, the youths within the Jewish community, still going to synagogue, on Sundays to Sunday School, and participating in whatever youth group activities, during those years, '42, '43, beginning of '44?

Absolutely. Because, certainly, at that time, the synagogue and the activities of synagogue, Jewish community, became a very central thing for the Jewish people. And that's-- we did this rigorously and regularly, because, certainly, that was one way to keep contact with one another. Also, we, of course, knew one another from school anyway, or from certain schools, and from where we lived. But, yes, that was a center of activity for whatever purpose.

And so we kept contact through the Jewish community, through the building, that hall that was next to the synagogue. And so that was quite important to us since we had no contact with the outside. We kept up with whatever we did with one another that way. All the Jews did, yes. The interesting thing was on the high holidays, one of the biggest events, I happen to have been on the synagogue choir. I had a voice till I was 13 or 14. After that, that was the end of it. But at that time, I had a pretty good voice, and I was often used to sing the blessing over the candles or stuff like that. But I was actually a member of the choir. My father was as well. And we would practice, and then we would--