

This is a taped interview, being made on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview is with Frank Ephraim. Interviewer, Nancy Alper. Today's date is April the 7th, 1997. This is the seventh tape, side A, or the first side.

As we were talking a little while ago about what we did, and some of the things that occurred after the liberation, we are talking now approximately the latter part of 1945, or let's say the middle of 1945. We're, let's say at-- probably on June, July 1945.

I had not been going to school. In fact, the last day of school was when the American forces came over Manila, as part of the Japanese drill air raid, on September the 1st, 1944. So here we here. We are almost nine months down the road, and no school of any kind. There were no schools open yet anywhere. Manila, as I mentioned, was essentially destroyed. The main parts of Manila, where Ermita Malate, the main residential areas, the downtown area.

But slowly and surely, we, of course, decided some schooling was necessary. There happened to be a woman, whose name was Mrs. Nathan. And she lived by herself, or sometimes with her brother, who was married, and was in business in Philippines. And she was a teacher.

And she became a tutor for me, and taught me for a year, over about a year's worth, roughly, nine months, perhaps, two courses-- algebra and French. So I took those two things from her, went to her house. And me, being curious about many things, like solutions to interesting mathematical, or warfare, or sea problems, navigation problems, we went to the areas like that, to learn about how to do triangulation.

But again, she gave me the basics in algebra, which I'll never forget. Because algebra is a basic mathematical skill, and it served me well. But I was not that good in calculus. But algebra was great fun. And of course, French-- now here, I was, having learned, certainly, English in 1939. When we arrived in the Philippines, Japanese and Tagalog was required during the occupation of the Japanese.

And then I had also taken Spanish sometime during the war, from a woman that was still on the, when we lived on Dakota street. And in fact, she lived just beyond those pink houses that I had mentioned before, and she taught me Spanish.

And so all these languages, I liked languages. And this was welcome. And so I studied, as I said, French and algebra. Then schools began to open again. And in this time, my father had gone back into business. He was always a self starting businessman. And import export was one of his loves. And in this case, he began to import things from the United States.

And what he imported was moldings-- wooden moldings, or wooden moldings covered with metal, moldings that's used for home construction interiors. Obviously, any kind of materials was in great demand in the Philippines, because of the vast destruction. And so there was rebuilding, at least slowly, but surely, going on. And so this kind of material was, of course, also in great demand.

So he began to do relatively well. Wasn't rich, but he did relatively well, by beginning to open up this business, selling these moldings, again, in factory lots, to do people who would retail them or use them directly in construction. And so they were able to afford to send me to this, what is known as the American School. That was its name, the American School, which had previously only been-- well, was certainly not open during the war.

Was essentially for Americans who live in the Philippines, and anyone else who could afford it. Because it was not that cheap. But it was not outrageous either. It had good teachers, and American teachers, who came from the US. The teacher I had was a graduate of Vassar, who taught me geometry. And then that school, also other members of the Jewish community my age-- quite a-- well, not quite a number, but a number of people.

And the only problem was, to get to this school, it was in one part of Manila, and we lived in another. We had eventually moved out of this lumber mill, into an apartment, which was like a two story house, also in the District of

Santa Mesa. And from there, to get to the American School was a heck of a distance. So we would have to take all kinds of transportation, which was not the world's greatest.

And two of my buddies, one was Hans Heinz Hoeflein. I believe I mentioned his name before. He was a son of a marine engineer. And the other was a fellow, name of Heli Meyer, Helmut Meyer. His father was a physician, only on the periphery of the Jewish community. Never did attend services. Perhaps once a year, for Yom Kippur, he would show up.

But Heli Meyer was not really schooled in Judaism at all. And neither was Hans Heinz Hoeflein. But they were essentially, you might say, peripherally associated with the community, but really on the edge. But anyway, they went to that school, and they were good friends of mine.

And what we would do is-- well, the American kids-- military kids, most of them-- were being picked up by army buses and taken to that school. So we would just simply hitch a ride with them, although we were not really supposed to. But we stepped on board, and hi, hi, hi, to the bus driver, and he didn't say anything. So we sat down. And back and forth, we used the American army provided transportation. t go to school.

And that, of course, went on for some time. And let's see. We're talking now toward the very latter-- early part of 1946. We're about a year after liberation, roughly. So there I was, in that school. I was a sophomore, second year, taking all these great courses in geometry, and struggling through biology, which I did not like.

But by that time, we were very close to emigrating, to leaving the Philippines. And this, in fact, did occur. I may have missed a number of other incidents here. But this, in fact, did occur. We were prepared to leave the Philippines in the latter part of 1946. The exact date of departure was to be November the 19th, 1946.

But as things were, the ship did not leave from Manila itself. It left from a small port in the province of Batangas. Batangas is a province south of Manila. And so therefore, we had to-- well, first of all, we had to pack up the stuff that we were going to take. There was no such thing as shipping things separately. Because in those days, the only way to get passage was on a ship that was under the war shipping administration. And the actual ships were operated-- many of them were what is called the US Victory Ships-- were operated by the various American shipping companies.

And in this case, the ship was to be run by the Pacific Far East Lines-- then a fairly large enterprise, run out of San Francisco. And the ship's name was the Anchorage Victory. This was the second long voyage taken in a ship which had the name victory. The first one was the Victoria on it. But of course, victory was a common name. There were sort of thousands of ships that were the victory class. The Anchorage Victory was the name of the ship.

But what we did was, we packed our things. My father was always very organized. I guess I am somewhat similar to that. We were given three army foot lockers, one for each of us, which she painted blue, with a white stripe across the middle, on its narrow part, to identify that these were ours. And then we packed what we had in those. And then we had some other smaller bags, and that was what we left with.

Now, if you recall, that model that I had built for the competition. I decided-- I had, in the meantime, started a even larger one out of cardboard. I'd finished to hull. It was to be the USS Missouri, a battleship of the US fleet. But I left that behind. Because that thing would have been over three feet long.

But the little fellow, I built a little cardboard box to slip it into. And that was going to be hand carried. And the footlocker was now filled. I didn't manage to bring some souvenirs. I own a Japanese steel helmet with a bullet hole in it, picked up on the field of battle. I own a bayonet with three notches in the handle, an America bayonet.

The three notches, apparently showing that this bayonet that managed to do in three people, and had been sharpened down to half the size that it was. A bowie knife that had been given to me by one of the soldiers of that 1113th marine unit, near where we lived, by the river, in the lumber mill. And some insignia badges that I collected from the US army-- its was of interest of every rank, including Colonel, the eagle. And those are my personal pieces of junk.

And things whatever clothes, everything we had went into the foot locker. And it was with that we went and got into a sort of cab like affair, leaving our house in Santa Mesa, leaving our cat, a little black and white job, with the house girl there, some people who lived downstairs.

And then left and headed for a sort of central spot in Manila, where we boarded a bus that would take us to Batangas. And that was about an hour and a half ride on the bus, I remember. We got to the docks. And there were three ships there. It was a very simple dock, one of which was the Anchorage Victory. We went aboard. The gangplank captain welcome bus, and he was out of San Francisco.

The ship was what was called in ballast, which means it was empty. It had been in the Far East for three months. In ballast, meaning that its tanks were filled with water, to weigh it down, so that it would be stable.

And the crew came aboard. Most of the crew came aboard a few hours later. Most had to be lifted and carried aboard. They was there, stone cold drunk. This was their last leave, before this voyage which was destined to take approximately 17 or 18 days, without stop. There was no scheduled stop-- well, the ship

We were given quarters in what is called the gun crew's portion in the after part of the deck. That's near the stern, the rear end of the ship. In that time, of course, the gun had been taken off the ship. That was, of course, used for anti-aircraft defense. This being after the war, no need for the gun, they took it off. But we were given the gun crew's quarters.

The gun crew's quarters was a one big room with three tiered bunks for the men. It could hold as many as 18. And then there was a small cabin built into the after part of the ship which held three people, that was for the so-called wipers. The wipers is the lowest engineering rank onboard the ship. But there were no wipers there. There were three women among the passengers-- my mother, and the daughter of-- then was a Jewish man and his daughter, name of Stargardter. The mother had died in the Philippines. And so she was in, one of the three women.

And the third was a Filipina woman, the wife of a man who was also going back to the States. About half of the people were Jews that were going to the United States. The other half were people who had-- who were ship captains, who were returning after they'd delivered ships to the Far East, and were returning as passengers. And so this was the makeup.

Now, ships were only allowed to carry 12 passengers. So we numbered, all told, three women, nine men. And my model ship, in this box, was on the little table, which was built into that large cabin, where the the nine men slept.

So we began. We left, and we were given food there. We ate in what's called the ward room, where the officers ate, ship's officers. And they served us food. And they served us. The salad was beet and onions, because these are two items that last forever. And that was in their stores. We thought that would vary. But we had beet and onions every night for 17 days, and so on and so forth.

I was the youngest person aboard, so I had a good time on the ship. But to a day and a half out of Batangas, we were in the San Bernardino Straits. And suddenly-- I believe it was at night-- that the ship, they lost the plant. And what that means is that the engine stopped. That's the term that is used when the machinery stops on a ship, or in the large steam pirate operation. They lose the plant. It stops.

And so the ship was adrift. It had no power. No water was being pumped, no lights electricity, no nothing. And began to roll like crazy, because it had no way of steering, either. And not only that, we were very close to an island. And it was beginning to drift in that direction. Here, this thing is a rolling 30 degrees to each side. They were giving us Jews to drink.

They were trying to get things started again. They had to restart something that's called an emergency generator, which normally kicks in automatically when the engine goes, plant goes down. But in this case, it did not. So they sent men down into the engine room. However, they can only stay there for about 15 minutes before they fainted, because of the tremendous heat. They couldn't breathe. So they had to be hauled out.

They were laid on the hatch covers, which are covers to cover the cargo hatches of the victory ship, and fanned by people, so they would revive. And they were going down in shifts. And this was going on and on and on. And the ship was drifting toward this island. So the captain decided that he would prepare the lifeboats, get them ready.

So indeed, they uncover the lifeboats. The victories carried four lifeboats-- one on each side. And it was rolling like crazy. And of course, lowering a lifeboat in those conditions is a little tricky. But they were doing that.

And in the meantime, they sent out an SOS on the Greenwich Mean Time frequency, that would be heard anywhere. And about four or five hours later, an American gray hauled freighter, or a military ship, rolled over into view, on the horizon. And the ship started flashing, blinking at us, in Morse code, with their lights. Our ship, we couldn't answer. Because we had no power.

So when the crew got on top of the flying bridge, which is the open bridge above the real bridge, and began to use two silver flags to return the messages. But they were going to stand by and see what would happen. But eventually, they managed to get this emergency generator going, which in turn began to power the plant and get the thing the engine started again.

And by the way, what they did in the emergency situation, they dropped both anchors to keep the ship from dragging. But even these anchors wouldn't quite hold. And they also took the American flag down and fluid upside down, which a sign of distress. So all these things were going on, and it was all quite interesting to me, certainly. It was a bit dangerous. We thought, we figured, well, we'd be kind of rowing ashore on this little, inhabited little island, but with the ship running aground, and all that.

And it was another load of stuff. But well-- in any event, they got the ship going again. It moved ahead, very slowly. The American ship stood by. You could see it, nighttime, had its lights on. And they were in communication. And it was doing what was called two knots, which is something like two and a half, three miles an hour, making headway.

And it began to pick up power, and eventually brought itself to about 15 knots, which is its cruising speed, top, best cruising speed. And from then on, day in and day out, we would be on that ship. They were chipping the decks. They were cleaning the ship. And I was buddying up with the crew.

And then we were a day out of San Francisco, 17 days later. The date must have been December the 7th. That's an interesting date. But what happened was, it was beginning to get cool. This was November, as it was no longer the tropics. And here, we're about to approach the United States, which is a very exciting time. Never been there.

So they said, well, what we do is, when the ship approaches land, is we have somebody stand up there in the bow, on the bridge. And they report to the captain, the first light. In other words, the first light that they see in the distance, you know-- that's landfall at night. So yeah, I'm not going to miss that.

So I climbed up on the flying bridge. That's the bridge above where the captain or the crew would steer the ship. And I was going to look for that first light myself. And indeed, there it was. It was about 2:00 in the morning, 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning. I told my parents and [INAUDIBLE] doing that, because I wanted to be around when that first light shows up.

So there I was. I saw that at first light. And then I heard them down below calling first light. And then they begin to head for that light, or whatever they do. The interesting thing-- as we came close to San Francisco, they usually-- the Farallon Islands are outside of San Francisco. And the swells are fairly strong outside of San Francisco. So they have a pilot that comes aboard the ship.

And the way it work at that time, the pilot ship was like a slope or a small schooner, a sailboat, large sailing craft. And we saw that come along. It was a distance, came closer. From that schooner, they dropped a little tiny rowboat, with one man rowing, and then a larger man, sitting in the stern. And he was dressed in an overcoat and a hat, like he was going into business. And he had a briefcase.

And he this man was rode across to us. In the meantime, our ship dropped the Jacob's ladder, which is the vertical ladder that's thrown overboard. And this man began to climb up the Jacob's ladder. That was the pilot.

And gee, that was a must been an old issue retired ship captains, these pilots. So sure enough, as he his head became visible, above the railing, the captain greeted him, and the came-- stepped aboard. And then they went up the bridge. And then we-- my feet my parents and all the others-- stayed up to watch the proceedings. And then pretty soon, we were under the Golden Gate Bridge. And it was-- must have been all 3:00 in the morning. So yeah, that was all-- the city was lit up. You could see lights.

And so we dropped some pennies over the side. And then as it proceeded, my mother looked in the distance. And there was looked like some sort of an island, and looked like there was a big houses. It was all lit up. These buildings, beautifully lit up. Those looked great. She says, oh, you must be a resort of some kind.

One of the crew next to her said, no ma'am. That's Alcatraz. That's a big prison. And obviously, it was lit up for security reasons. Anyway, the ship came into the harbor, dropped anchor, and stayed there for the night. We did not come along into a dock into San Francisco till the next morning, because we had to be checked by the customs, and by the quarantine people, and had to fill out forms, the usual kinds of things that you do when you arrive at a port.

And the next morning, the ship was pulled into Pier 90 at Hunter's Point, and Hunter's Point's a naval shipyard. It's northern, very north. It's way inside the bay, and for some reason they docked there instead of the regular docks. I don't know why. Maybe the ship was going to be repaired or something.

And what happened was my mother has relatives all over the world, and there, too, were relatives waiting for us. They were the [PERSONAL NAME], a man and his two sisters-- none of them married-- who had immigrated to the United States, I suppose, in the 30s like other people. He worked for Levi Strauss & Company, where he was a warehouse men and packer.

He was sort of a socialist and loved the labor movement, and San Francisco being a Union town, this was ideal. His two sisters worked in a sausage factory of some kind. They were in pretty good shape, and they had us in, and we ate with them and everything and very nice to us.

And there was also a lady that welcomed us and the other family onboard. She was from the HIAS, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, and she said, oh, how many-- you need accommodations? And we says, yeah, we do. We don't have any place. And so she somehow managed to get us a-- what it was was in the hotel. It was called the Richelieu Hotel. It was the corner of Van Ness and Geary Street in San Francisco, where she got us a room, which we paid for, of course.

And so our very first day in San Francisco was like this. We got off the ship. There was a cab. We loaded our footlockers into the cab. We're wearing sort of half-army clothes, at least my father and I, khakis, and I wore this jacket that I'd gotten from the joint distribution, which really, for San Francisco nights, was not very warm. But that was the best thing I had.

We were driven to this hotel. I'm quite observant, so as we drove into the city from Hunter's Point, we drove down Market Street, which is the main street. And then we came by what looked like an enormous movie house called the Fox Theater. It was enormous.

And I saw on this marquee it was showing the movie The Verdict with Peter Lorre and Sydney Greenstreet. And I liked those. I really liked that stuff, so I marked it in my head and then followed the cab as to where it went because I didn't know what was going. I didn't know where the hotel was.

It made one more turn into Van Ness Avenue, where they sell cars-- that's a street where automobiles are sold and where there are shops and stuff-- to the hotel, which happened to be on Van Ness. And I sort of estimated the distance because I said to myself, tomorrow morning, I'm going to walk down there to that movie. I want to see that movie.

So sure enough the next morning we got up, and we went across the street to a place called Foster's, which was a small chain that served breakfast and things like that, very simple food. They no longer exist, but they were all over the city in those days.

So after that I think my parents or somebody else had already arrived, the San Francisco people they know from the Philippines, and they were going to meet them. And I was going to go to that movie, which I then walked down Van Ness Avenue, made that turn, and there was the movie. It was enormous. And it was daytime, so I was not that full. So I went to see the movie. It was one of first things I did in San Francisco. It was really--

Frank, why don't you tell me what you remember about the immigration experience itself, either when you were departing from the Philippines and when you arrived in San Francisco? And I assume you still had your Japanese passport that said "stateless, homeless Jews." Or you were still on your mother's passport, I think.

Well, that passport was really the German passport with these stateless stamp in it that's put in by the Japanese. It really was no longer a valid document, and it was also an unnecessary document because by then we had obtained a visa for entry into the United States of the American consulate in the Philippines. And that was given to us on the strength of these affidavits that were given by the relatives to sponsor us to assure that we would not be a burden on the government or the state of the United States.

So these are papers that are valid entry papers. The only other thing we had to do was to go for a physical examination. They, of course, screened for tuberculosis and other diseases which they had problems with. So having passed those physical exams and having the visa was-- the entry visa was the basic document you needed.

And when we arrived in San Francisco Bay, the people that came aboard were the typical quarantine people. They just checked to see whether there was any communicable disease onboard, whether the people were healthy, standard procedure. As far as the immigration was concerned, they, of course, looked at the documents, the visa, and that was it. And I think whether or not they give us some kind of piece of paper, a landing paper or not I'm not sure. I don't remember that. But it was fairly pro forma. That was not the really-- I don't recall that as having any complications, at least by the time we entered San Francisco.

I also wanted to ask you before we leave that topic. I assume at the time that you were leaving with your parents from the Philippines there were a lot of other people either in the process of leaving, or having already left, or still there but trying to leave. Is there anything in particular that you remember about promises to get together later, particular experiences of where other people were going and what was happening to them?

Absolutely. The Philippine , given this experience, was very close-knit. Most people left. Oh, in the years 46, 47, certainly by 48. There were a few that remained. They were either in business there. It was to their interest to remain for that reason. They would perhaps come to the United States for visits or send their children here for schooling.

However, most left. And I would say, roughly speaking, 70% came to the United States, 30% went to Australia, and in between there were some who might have gone to Palestine at the time.

What happened when we got to the United States? A number of people settled in San Francisco. Many others went East, to New York and other parts of the country, but I would say primarily the two coasts were the main recipients. We ourselves, after having spent some time in San Francisco three weeks or so, went to Los Angeles. My father thought he would like to, perhaps, go into business in LA. We took the train down. We stayed there for a month. We didn't like it, at least my mother didn't. I didn't, and I don't think my father did. We came back to San Francisco and settled there.

However, we got together mostly with people who also were in the Philippines, again, this couple that married, where she was the nurse and he was one of the survivors who had been bayoneted. There were people like the Leopolds, who-- he had a butcher shop where they made sausages, frankfurters. He was there, and his family came shortly thereafter, his wife and two boys.

There were a whole list of people. We indeed had a little Manila Jewish community there. Even, I believe, the cantor eventually arrived there and married in San Francisco and later on went to settle in San Diego, but he also was there. That rabbi left. In fact, I don't know if he left just before us or not long there after. He settled in Benton Harbor, Michigan, where he ran a congregation for many years until he retired. He occasionally came to visit San Francisco with his wife, and there was lots of visiting among the people.

Even to this day-- we're in 1997-- there is contact, now, of course, more of the younger generation. The old [HEBREW] group-- as we had a reunion here, they're still try to maintain the connections. And I've maintained contact with several friends, like the Leopolds, and there was another, two boys, the [? Ambruns ?] who lived in San Francisco. So there's always been that by-letter contact. Even people that went to Australia are still in contact with people here in the United States and elsewhere, so this bond has remained.

We even had a Manila Evening once or twice in San Francisco, and they had many more like that in New York, where there was an even larger number of people from the Philippines. So we had a mock-wedding of the cantor and his wife, who was not in the Philippines, but we did it in the Philippine style. And it was a very comical idea. The man that ran that-- it was a man about 6 foot 6 tall-- his name was [? Sundheimer ?]-- and his wife was about 4 foot 2. I'm exaggerating a bit.

But there were a childless couple, and he was a funny guy. And they were both in business in San Francisco. But he officiated, and he did that all the joke parts and everything and initiated them into the kinds of foods that people from the Philippines eat, and then the kinds of habits that they have, and so on. So we had some fun evenings reminiscing about the Philippines.

So there's always been, since then, contact, and some are closer. Some are not as close. It all depends, of course. And if you live in the same area, do visit. Here in the Washington area, unfortunately, I'm the only one, but there are people up in New York, Connecticut, and Missouri, and California, so we do see one another. So yes, that is a continuing bond.

What kind of business did your father get into in San Francisco, and what happened to you in terms of schooling and adjustment?

Well, after the one-week sojourn at the Richelieu Hotel. We went to Los Angeles, as I said. When we got back, there was no way of getting an apartment or renting anything. The American soldiers coming back from the war, of course, were seeking homes and apartments, so the housing situation was hopeless. We were forced to move into a hotel, which was really set up for-- like a residential hotel. It was the Majestic Hotel in Sutter Street in San Francisco, which today has been refurbished into a sort of almost neoclassical structure. It kind of fancy. In those days, it was very simple.

And that included meals, which weren't very good. And in the hotel where also several other families, also refugees like us from the Philippines. And we had like two rooms and a bath, and that was it. And we lived in that hotel for a year.

Now, at that point, of course, my parents were saying, this fella has to get back to school. After all, again, I had had a gap, mid-November until here we were back in-- we were now-- we had been Christmas, New Year's in Los Angeles. We were in late January 1947.

So what to do? Well, they called up the Board of Education to find out, well, what do we do with this kid? Where do we send him? And we asked-- there's this high school called the High School of Commerce on Van Ness Avenue. Mind you, that's exactly the street I walked along when I went to that movie, and it's about 12 blocks away. And he could take the streetcar down Van Ness Avenue, walk two blocks down from Sutter and Gough Street, and take the streetcar, and get right there, no problem.

And on Van Ness, in addition to all the sales places, city hall is located on Van Ness Avenue, and across from city hall are two large buildings. Once the War Memorial Opera House, and next to it is the War Memorial something or other, also a huge building, and right next to that, on that side, a big football field. And next to that is the High School of Commerce.

And that's where I walked in. In fact, my mother took me there because-- make sure I got there. Being the anxious type of person, you want to be certain. And so I was taken into that school. However, it had so happened that it was at the-- this was like the very last week of the low sophomore year. It was mid-year, so a week or two later would be high 10, yeah, high 10, high sophomore.

Well, they looked at me, and they asked me whether I'd taken this, and that, and the other. And they said, well, we'll just stick you into that last week of the low sophomore and then see how you do. And then if you do OK, well, you can go into high sophomore.

Well, this school-- let's face it-- was not a college prep high school. It was in an area which served, well, the Chinese community, the black community, the Hispanic community, and maybe there were two or three Jews in that place. I don't know. But I did very well there, and I didn't have any problem. And I went into high sophomore.

I also took gym for a while but wasn't that crazy about gym. They offered something called ROTC, and I think everyone knows what that stands for, the Reserve Officers' Training Corps junior-style. And my old military itch got into me, and I joined them. And this was great stuff, although it was reminiscent of the war years, but it was the kind of thing that I suppose I drifted to. I always was interested in that kind of activity, whenever.

And so I learned to shoot and was on the rifle team and eventually won the [? Hurst ?] match, and the other match, and all kinds of stuff. And I became a captain in that ROTC, and one day they gave me this medal, among others. There were other people getting medals.

And this old man came, and he gave me this medal for having had the high score on a combined set of matches of some kind, and mind you, I was not a citizen of the United States at that time. It turned out that he was a member of the Sons of the American Revolution, and this was the Sons of the American Revolution medal for having gotten the highest points [INAUDIBLE]. It was sort of the opposite of the DAR. It was kind of ironic.

But nonetheless, as he pinned it on me and talked something about Theodore Roosevelt-- I'd forgotten what he said, but it was really interesting. But that was my-- so I went to high school two and 1/2 years and graduated in 1949 from the High School of Commerce.

Were there any courses that you had had no background in whatsoever as a result of your rather spotty education in the Philippines?

English definitely was one, and I had a wonderful teacher by the name of Mary Golding. And she one day approached me and said, you know, Frank, with all your background, we've got a couple of things coming up here. This was now just before the summer of 1948. And she said one is there's a contest that's given by the American Legion. It's a speaking contest, and winners get taken to the Boys State in Sacramento. It's a nationwide program. Why don't you try out for that?

And the other, she said, is the same summer. It's something called the Junior State of America. They give scholarships for six weeks. You go up to a place called Montezuma Mountain School for Boys near Los Gatos in Santa Cruz, and they have all kinds of courses. It's very interesting. It's very limited. There's only 20 boys that are taken there every year for summer. And then it's also 20 girls, but they actually are taken to Mills College for the six weeks, and you get together and all kinds of stuff like that.

This is OK. What have I got lose? And so I went for this speaking contest, the American Legion. There were six other contestants, but I won. And there was a panel that judged, including the San Francisco Sheriff and people like that there were members of the American Legion Post. And so they gave me a few bucks, and then I attended the Boys State in Sacramento.

And that was fascinating. It was about a thousand boys, and they were organized into political parties. And I learned a lot about the American government. And the fellow that actually eventually won, this governor, was in the bunk right next to mine. I talked to him, a very bright guy from the southern part of the state. And I met a lot of guys there, and it



was very interesting.

But it was only a week, and then after that, I went and I did get that scholarship for the six weeks up in Montezuma. There was 20 boys. I was the only foreigner. They were all white, and they were all-- I was the only Jew. The place was actually run by Professor Rogers, who had formed this with the idea that-- his motto was, "Make democracy work."

And the boys were all politically astute. They were like Republicans and Democrats, and 1948, we're talking Truman and Dewey. Get your ass off the grass. It's Dewey in November.

This is an interview being made on behalf of United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview is with Frank Ephraim. The interviewer is Nancy Alper. Today is April the 7th, 1997. This is the second side, side B, of the seventh tape of the interview.

And we were at this point where I was heading for the six weeks session in the Montezuma Mountain School for Boys near Los Gatos in the Santa Cruz area of California, Santa Cruz, the mountain air of California. And there was this Professor Rogers, who had founded the organization back in the early 30s to make democracy work. He was a very philosophical type of guy.

The courses we took there could be divided into government, into public speaking, into ethics, which he taught himself, and into other aspects of civics. It was all totally focused on that. Politics were at the center of the thing. Most of the boys that were there had some experience with local politics already. Strange as it may seem, we were all 17 years old, juniors in high school, and some of those boys became well-known in later years.

Amongst them were none other than Ed Meese, who was an assistant to Ronald Reagan then came here to Washington. I met him here again. Since we all were members of this organization as a lifelong thing, once we were a junior statesman for our summer sessions-- we were the '48 session, 1948-- we became graduate statesmen and are still members, directly or indirectly, of that organization even today.

And the other was a fellow named Herb Ellingwood, perhaps not as well known. He came from a town of Salinas, where his father was a farmer. He also was one of the assistants to Ronald Reagan during his governorship of California. He also came with him here to Washington when Reagan was elected president.

There was another fellow name of Scheer, who was a very conservative guy from the La Mesa, San Diego area. And he and I got along very well, but he became later on the California spokesperson or campaign manager for George Wallace.

And there were people, of course, on the Democratic. It was a mix of people from liberal to conservative. I was sort of an outsider in a way because, after all, I'd had very little experience with politics in the United States but became very-- got into that, and it was quite interesting. But I never myself was a member of a campaign, although a friend of mine did run for something, but that's neither here nor there.

I just want to mention that we now revert back to adjustments coming to this country, adjustments to the country, adjustments to the people, the schools. As you recall, I went through the High School of Commerce because it was the closest school. However, at the time I had no idea what other schools, if any, there where.

One day each of us had gotten a locker in that school to put our clothes or to put books in, and I noticed on the locker there were the signs that said "Beat Mission." And for a moment I thought, my God, this is some sort of a anti-religious type of graffiti, and so I did finally ask this one fellow, who I got to know in my registry class. That's a class that meets 20 minutes at the beginning of school before we all dispersed to our various other courses.

I says, what's this "Beat Mission" thing? Oh, he says, yeah, we're playing Mission this weekend at football. Mission, Mission? What-- Mission is another high school. Oh, really? And I said, you mean there are two high schools here in San Francisco? He says, what are you talking about? There's seven or eight. I said, really? Oh, I didn't know that. So that was the newness of the situation.

Now. Some of my other friends, as I found out later, who, when they came here from the Philippines-- they went to other schools. They went to George Washington High School or Lincoln, and those were really far more college prep schools than the High School of Commerce. However, I did very well at High School of Commerce, and also, as I said, I went to these two summer sessions back to back in 1948 and then went and completed my senior year at the High School of Commerce.

And meantime, my father was continuing to do his export business, and I had a job after school at first for Globe Wireless delivering telegraph messages in downtown San Francisco. And one day I was wearing my ROTC uniform and with another fellow. By then we were officers, and we went across the street to this shop which sold uniforms.

And the fellow said-- and we bought some stuff, and he says, would you like a job as whatever it is, clean-up man and helper here? And so I took the job, and I worked there for about two years after school and on weekends working for L. [? Resnik ?] and Son-- it was a Jewish outfit-- in this uniform store-- it sold police uniforms, sold army, Air Force uniforms, and all that sort of thing-- until I went off to college.

My father, in the meantime-- by 1948, that business, actually, was about a year-- that business he did in the Philippines, importing moldings-- and he was going to continue something like that from this end, from the American end, exporting. But that did not work out too well.

So instead he went into importing Chinese figurines, little clay figurines, unpainted, from China. They were shipped to him, and he would sell them all over the place. He mounted them on driftwood and would sell that stuff. However, that began to close down because China was occupied by the communists 1948, and of course, the Shanghai Jewish community, what was left of it, were beginning to arrive in Manila by the ship loads. And we would go, again, to the docks to meet the ships, and again, there were people that we knew from way back in Germany, even, and we'd known that had gone to Shanghai.

And these people were being settled, held over in San Francisco. They were put into hotels, and there were all kinds of organized efforts to then move them into other areas. There was a batch that moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico because people felt that that must be a good place to settle since San Francisco was beginning to be a bit overloaded. And a number went to Albuquerque and to other parts of the country, but a good number, of course, from Shanghai stayed.

They brought their rabbi, Dr. Kantorowsky. They founded a huge community, the B'nai Emunah, a synagogue attended by the people from Shanghai. We attended a synagogue, again, made up of, essentially, German and Austrian Jews in San Francisco. It was called the Council of 1933, obviously '33 being a significant year of the rise of Nazism.

And this was a group of people, of course, who emigrated to the United States thereafter, many of whom came directly from Europe. Others joined them who were either from Shanghai or the Philippines, and the Philippine, Manila community was always small. So we would always join someone else for services, certainly, once a year, Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah, which they held.

And so we were part of that from a religious standpoint. I was never that great in the religious department, though my parents were. And they tried to, of course, force me into that, but I was not totally enamored with that. I did go to Jewish affairs. I did go to dances. I went to the Jewish Community Center, yes, but religiously I was never that strong a believer.

But in any event, that was our early years in San Francisco. We adapted fairly easily. My father had some difficulties in earning a living, but he was very industrious, always was a busy fellow. And he got into-- after this business of exporting collapsed, he eventually got in to the optical eyeglass and frame business, first working for another person who was in that business.

It was a wholesale thing where you'd have you'd go around and sell the eyeglass frames and lenses to optometrists, and then later on he went into it on his own. And my mother helped him, and that's what he did until he eventually retired, probably by the age of 80. And he traveled in California down to as far as Fresno and up north and also within the city,

of course, so that's what he did and did find there.

It was not enough to send me to the greatest college in the country, but I went to the University of California at Berkeley and stayed there until-- it was 1950 when the Korean War broke out. I was at the university. With finances being what they were, I thought I'd take a year off. I got a job at the Mare Island Naval Shipyard. At that time I was studying to be a naval architect or mechanical engineer-- these two things were taught together at the University of California-- and went to work at Mare Island.

There was a special program for students in naval architecture, and they were very glad to have me. And so I stayed there. It was just for summer at first, but when I told them I'd like to be out of school here, he says, great, stay with us. That would be wonderful, and then you can earn your money, go back to school. That was the plan.

That didn't work. The Korean War, of course, drew people in from my age group, which was a small number, the Depression Babies, so to speak, and I was drafted, although the shipyard sent a letter to the Draft Board signed by the shipyard commander, something to the effect, without me, why, the submarine fleet would go out of business. It would sink. But they didn't buy that, so I was drafted in the United States Army.

I went to the service on December the 2nd, 1952 and served for 21 months because-- I was let out three months early because the Korean War had been over, and they allowed people out three months early, provided they were accepted at a college and that the beginning of the college year tied in within those three months, which it did.

So I served in the United States Army. I was trained infantry for 16 weeks at Fort Ord, California since I was what they call it a "picket fence," had all ones, physically great condition. And so I was in the infantry and graduated and that.

I was sent to Europe because I spoke German, and they asked people, anyone here speak a foreign language? So I raised my hand, and they gave me a test. I actually took the test in German, French, and Spanish, passed them all. And they said, well, in that case, you're great interpreter material, and chances are you'll be assigned to European Theater.

Well, at that time, Korean War was still going strong, and the company I was in-- it was about 300 men, heavy weapons infantry company. And when the time came and the 16 weeks were over, we were all assigned, and there were four of us out of that 300 who were assigned to the European Theater. Everyone else was the other assigned to Japan, Korea, or remained in the United States for the training.

And so the four of us went by ourselves by train or whatever for the East Coast or to Camp Kilmer and from there shipped by ship to Bremerhaven and from there by train to [PLACE NAME] and [PLACE NAME] in Germany. And there we were interviewed and assigned further.

There I was sent to a school which-- they first said it was finance school, but it turned out to be a school where I was to learn the IBM machines. It was 1952, and we were taught by a Swiss instructor in some sort of German kaserne, which is a German barracks. It was in a town called-- gee, I forgot for the second. Lenggries it was called. It was near Bad Tolz, which was later a center for the 10th Special Forces.

So I went to that school, took my IBM, was assigned to Heidelberg, stayed there one month, and was sent to France, and spent the rest of my army career in France, stationed there. So that now takes us down to the year 1954.

Of course, during all these years I essentially lived in and around San Francisco. While I was working at the shipyard, I lived in Vallejo, California. That's where Mare Island Naval Shipyard was located. And I lived in Berkeley when I went to school there.

But up to the time when I went into the service and even thereafter, my parents were always members of this Council of '33 group for the simple reason that they would go to the services that were held only on the high holidays and sponsored by this organization.

It probably is good to point out that Jews with our background, from the Philippines, from Germany and Austria, were

in many ways quite different from most American Jews, the reason being-- well, it's hard to say whether it's culturally or what or based on experience, but I suppose the majority of American Jews stemmed from Eastern Europe and where Yiddish-speaking originally, which the Western Jews were not. There's a major difference in background.

Also in experience-- after all, people who came to United States, oh, at the beginning of the century, established themselves here, went through several hours, experienced some very hard times also, the depression, and just being accepted as Jews here certainly, and were certainly on the periphery of things. They were not in the big wheels, in the steel business but were in the scrap iron business, or they were in the clothing business, or they wear beginning to be in the professions of medicine and law.

There weren't very many Jewish engineers and still aren't. They were certainly not in agriculture. So they were a peripheral people, as, unfortunately, Jews are in the diaspora today, even.

So not that the German-Austrians were any different. They were the same. They also had that similar background, medicine, law, clothing, sales, retail, et cetera.

But we were different because mainly, I, think of the experiences, the life we'd gone through. We look back, those who came through the Philippine experience and perhaps the Shanghai experience-- we left with not very much from Germany, had to start again in the Philippines at the beginning. Accumulated some things, lost them all during the Battle of Manila in 1945, accumulated a few things thereafter, three footlockers for three people, and arrived in San Francisco again, starting again from the very beginning.

By that time, most Jews in America had already been accumulated and been established, so there was this social and cultural difference that, naturally, was there. And by the very fact that we'd been in another part of the world, we drifted more toward those people with similar experiences. Birds of a feather flock together. It certainly is true. So not that there was any animosity. I didn't detect any of that. But we were different.

Also we were different simply because, in the Jewish culture, there is the Yiddish-speaking, non-Yiddish speaking part. And there's the Ladino-speaking, which we have also, of course, experienced. So these internal Jewish cultural difference also existed. However, as part of the larger community, we were all Jews from that standpoint.

The other interesting difference was, when I came to San Francisco or not too long thereafter, while I was going to college, these Shanghai people, as I mentioned, were coming in in droves in 1948, and they, too, were imbued with the Zionist idea. A number of them had trained in Shanghai as part of the Betar, which was the more conservative group, and various labor-oriented Zionist organizations, which had formed in Shanghai, trained and went to help in Israel, '48, when the state was established.

Not only that, in San Francisco, most of us who came from Shanghai or Manila were members of Zionist groups. I was a member of three of them, and they were militant. And we did those, quote, "militant" things. We went around selling the shekels, and we went around trying to convince American Jews to participate.

And it is very interesting. At that time, the American Jews, we sensed, who had been here, were not that-- they were certainly pro-Judaism, pro-Israel, but they were not really actively participating. Collecting funds for Israel was a bear. There were people who would come over from Israel expecting to be received here, and money being thrown at them, and all that because they represented various organizations.

It was difficult, although many took part in the effort, like George Jessel, certainly, who played a major role, and many important people on the only American scene in the movie business and so on. However, when it came to doing things like trying to gather material for the Israelis or for the Israeli army in this country, that was tough. There were many American Jews who were very influential. There are several books written. One's called The Pledge, where people gathered material, collected money to buy related war material.

There was this fellow by the name of Schwimmer, who was Israeli, who came to this country to procure airplanes. And he came to California, and he got hold of Constellations, which was a commercial airplane, and P-51 Mustangs, and

eventually three B7 teams Flying Fortresses were put together and flown to Israel at that time, 1948.

But we were active in trying to locate simple things, like simple water flasks, and web belts, and stuff like that because this was all surplus material and could be exported. It was not weaponry, although weaponry went as well.

But those people in Zionist groups were promoting this strongly, were trying to assist in it, trying to collect money or gather money, yet very few, quote, "native" American Jews were part of these Zionist organizations in San Francisco. We had, as I say, three or four of them, and pretty much the majority of membership were people who were from Shanghai, who were originally from Germany, or Austria, or Poland who had come to this country in more recent years or a few of us from the Philippines, not very many.

But that was the consist of the Zionist movement in the San Francisco area, although, as I say, there were many large rallies for Israel where people attended. There were evenings. They had music, and stuff like that, and speakers, and so on, yeah.

I also wanted to ask you before we move to the post-Korean War period, when you were in Germany, when you were assigned there, did you go to where you had lived as a child, or try to find family, or try to trace anything that had happened? I never went back-- during my military career, I never went back to Berlin. At that time, Berlin was, of course, a divided city. We were asked or told, really, not to go there as military on leave or anything like that, so we didn't go.

Family-- well, we knew they had all perished. Whatever was left there was gone, and so there was really no point in seeking family there. Some people-- we didn't know what happened to them. I didn't, perhaps, mention this one uncle, my mother's uncle, actually, who lived in a house that was owned by the family.

And we never knew what had happened to him. He was a bachelor. We only found that out after I'd been a volunteer at the Holocaust Museum here in Washington, and these books came in. These were two big black books which listed, oh, about 100,000 or so names of German Jews-- they're published by the Germans-- that had perished, and listed their names, and where possible, listed where they perished and perhaps the date, if that was available.

And I looked this man up, and there I found his name. This was the first time we knew in all that time that he indeed had committed suicide so as not to be arrested by the Nazis, and that's how we knew then, finally, what happened to him.

And I had guessed that he might have been buried at that cemetery four blocks away. I called them up, and they called me back. Yes, he's buried there. He's listed. And I did manage to locate the grave a few years ago visiting that area, so these are some of the things that happened later. But I never went back to Berlin while I was in the military. I did go back in later years, once, twice.

What was your reaction to being around Germans when you were there?

That was the thing that sort of made me a bit nervous at first. We landed by a troop ship at Bremerhaven. It must have been sometime around the 1st of April, 1953, and the first chairman I heard in that context was the dockers docking the ship.

I was onboard the ship in a special group that included other Americans of German origin. Interesting enough, none of them were Jewish. They were Germans who come here and were still somewhat enamored with Germany. But these were younger people. They were not born in Germany.

But we were all, quote, "interpreters" or something of that nature, and I was with them. They did not know I was Jewish since we didn't exchange any personal identification at all. That was the reason for that.

But we're in uniform, and so we first met Germans with a troop train that pulled alongside the ship, the dock, and we were put onboard that. There was about a thousand of us. That took us all the way, practically, to-- I guess it was to Frankfurt. It had seats that turned into bunks so we could sleep there. It's like a troop barracks train with a cafeteria car

hooked up in the middle. You could line up, and walk through, and pick up some food.

But there was a German porter assigned to each car, and so it was the first person that you ran into that was a German-German. And we talked to him in German, and this was a very ordinary man. Our reaction was, we were military. You play the role of that, and you didn't have much to do with them. My own reaction was that I had little or no interest in dealing with the Germans except in an official capacity.

But this, of course, was often the case. I had to deal with them, talk to them. They would always see-- well, they would look at you because you were wearing an American uniform when I was in uniform, and their view was that you might be-- in their eyes, you were sort of, quote, "a traitor" because you had deserted Germany to go to America and become an American soldier to come back to be a big boss or be someone. That was their view of you. They didn't see me as a Jew, but that was their view. It was very interesting.

But I never let on because, to me, they were robots, and I viewed them with that kind of attitude, interesting but irrelevant to me. If they thought that, that was fine. There were times when I was able to, in civilian clothes, mingle among the Germans. We were at that point-- in this unit, we're able to do that.

The interesting part there was one had the impression-- they had not typically or realistically changed very much, not that I was an expert on their philosophy or psychology before the war, during, or after. But their ways of interpreting, their commentary, their discretion was very definitely-- I guess to them, Jews, foreigners, Americans-- they were not on the preferred list.

There was one incident alone I recall that I was with three-- there were four of us, and we were in uniform, all German-speaking. And we went into this town and went to eat in a guest house, a restaurant, and went in there, and they sort of looked at us and-- we said in English-- we decided we would only talk in English since we were wearing American uniforms.

So they finally gave us a table, which was really for 8, but there was four of us, set us down. And the place began to fill up, and of course, all the other tables were being filled with Germans. And they were moving eight people into a section, fill up the tables, except they would move no one to our table. No one was being asked to sit there.

Finally, the place got so full that I suppose in desperation two couples were put at our table. And we continued speaking English amongst one another, and these Germans sat down, began to speak German, and pretty soon they discussed American soldiers, how badly they were behaved, and how lousy they were, and all these things. And of course, we all understood what they were saying.

So we decided we were going to go back to our base on the train, say, at 10:00 or 10:30, and we decided that we would automatically-- in English we discussed as we quickly among us. We would switch automatically into German at a certain signal. So we were all from California, as it turned out, and we said 15 minutes before we leave one of us would utter the word "California." And from that second on our conversation would all be German, which happened. California, and we switch into German.

And these people were so astounded. They never uttered a single word until we left, not a word. It was just our way of reacting to their views. We never said anything to them when we moved. Oh, just excuse me, all in German, just smiled in there then walked away out the door after we paid, of course. So these were some of the incidences-- I'm sorry, incidents that occurred when I was in the service in Germany, always interesting.

They were trying to buy cigarettes from us at the railway station. When we arrived, say, from Munich we were stationed at Lenggries. And a box of cigarettes and-- they tried to, of course, cheat you by gathering the cigarettes, offering a very high price, and then walking around a little bit, and then finally giving you money at the very last moment when it would look like plainclothes German police arrived. They were neither police. They were one of their gang but made it appear as if they're about to pounce upon all these people dealing with cigarettes.

They would then slip soldiers paper with a one, single 10 mark note wrapped around it for cigarettes worth 500 marks or

something like that. So there had been cases like that, and so they had sent us to look into the situation because we could both be soldiers, and we could both be civilians speaking German. So yes, indeed.

And they would always prey on guys or soldiers. But then when these plainclothes guys showed up, who were really part of the gang, we surrounded them, and blocked them from leaving the area, and then got the German police to arrest them because we did not have civil authority-- we were not law officers.

But our job was to protect the American soldier from being taken in. So these are some of the things that we got into, but the rest of the time in the service was spent in France because they needed people there. And so we were draftees, and that other part of the job was not as important anymore.

I was going to ask you, Frank-- you mentioned the differences between your Jewish community, those who had had experiences and had a different cultural derivation than the American Jewish community, and I wondered, too, how citizenship, how American citizenship in particular, felt different for you and perhaps for your family and the other members of this expatriate community compared to what you saw around you in the United States.

Well, there are two views on that, I think. Certainly, we looked forward to becoming citizens of the United States. After all, we had been stateless all this time, and we had taken out our so-called "first papers" shortly after we arrived. We were allowed to work here and everything.

So certainly in 1952 it was, I believe-- it just before I was drafted into the army. It was that year, '52. March of '52, I believe, we became citizens of the United States, having studied and learned all the things you needed to know, gone through the testing procedure, sworn in in a large group in the opera house with Danny Kaye as the guest entertainer and speaker for the occasion.

That was all very interesting, and I think that was a big moment in our lives, the first time again being a formal citizen of a country, the diverse country, obviously, but nonetheless, that was very important to us and welcome that we sought that right from the beginning, I'm sure as everyone did.

But of course, after that, there you were, a citizen, and you did your voting, and you did everything. And most people that became citizens were very patriotic people. They certainly believed in everything that country stood for. They are very meticulous about voting. They're very meticulous about following the laws, the rules, and paying their income tax, and doing all these things, and sometimes almost too much so when other people would say, oh, you don't have to do this or you don't have to do that. Those that became citizens certainly liked to follow the laws and the processes in this country.

But other than that, people after while also looked at the policies of this country, and if I sit back here I would say that, unfortunately, many times what may appear to be a great support for the notion of the state of Israel, or for the Israelis, or for the Jewish people by American presidents or perhaps by the Congress and the public tends to get warped a bit.

I speak from the standpoint of Judaism as a nation. I see being Jewish no different from being Irish or Italian. When they say, Jews, if you're so interested in Israel, why don't you go live there, it's like saying to an Italian, if you want to be an Italian, why don't you go live in Italy or the Vatican as a Catholic or the same with the Irish people or anyone else. I view the Jews as a nation, not as a religion. I don't view-- the religion is, to me, a separate-- well, not quite separate but a different thing.

I am very, very, very cautious about any kind of cultism that can be developed from religion and Judaism included because if we look back on the origins of Nazism of that era, people often say that much of what happened in Germany in the 30s is a result of the Versailles Treaty, which I believe is nonsense because, really, it was the Kaiser who fought the First World War. He was the one that did the attacking. He's the one that created the situation. The Germans suffered accordingly, as did many others but not react as the Germans did.

The Kaiser, unfortunately, was a man that-- it was a man who was physically somewhat, deformed. He had a shriveled arm, and this may or man not have given him a complex. In pictures you saw him carrying long gloves in that shortened

arm and his uniform.

This brings us-- and I will talk about that in a little while-- to other people who have had what we call today disabilities, psychological problems as well, and that's when we get, certainly, to the four people that formed the core of Nazism in their late 20s and 30s. But if you want to wait for that, we'll do it just in a moment.