

This is an interview being conducted on behalf of the 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 first side, side A, of the eighth tape of the interview.

So I want to digress back a little bit from my comments just before. And this deals really with my beginning and strong interest in Judaism as a nationality or Jews as a nation as opposed strictly to Jews as a religion. And that is the sort of environment in which I was brought up in-- the religious aspect of it.

And of course, when we were liberated, as I mentioned, with the inculcation of Zionism, the concept of a Jewish state-- excuse me-- I began to think seriously of Judaism as a nation. And I was not alone, of course, in this. The State of Israel was founded in 1948 with strong support of people that I was always with. And I have continued this particular view ever since.

I totally disregard the notion that Jews, if they're going to be Zionists, should move to Israel. This is a nonsensical concept, like I said before, as even suggesting Irish Americans move back to Ireland and so on. As I say, Judaism to me is not solely a religion. In fact, I am a little bit suspicious of Orthodox Judaism because it becomes cultism.

And cultism is the kind of thing which says, "Do as I do, or die." And this is what we have seen in the advent of the Nazi Party. We see it in part in the world with the Catholic Church, based on my own experience. And unfortunately, we continue to see that in some South American countries, and certainly in the Philippines, where, as a result of the interference and involvement of the Church in politics and the social life of the Philippines, the population has grown to such an extent that they, of course, are exporting people.

There is certainly not enough work or sustenance for them to stay in the Philippines. They have doubled the number to 36 million in contrast to 18 million at the time I was there. So that the philosophies of birth control or being anti-birth control by the Church is one that is, in my opinion, very detrimental. It's detrimental to a democratic society. And it's detrimental to the people, to their health, their economy, to their education, and unfortunately still prevails in many parts of the world.

And also then, of course, there is Islam, which has similar qualities, wherein the philosophy also is, "Do as I do, or die." And we see that in places like Saudi Arabia, where in fact the United States policy has really not been thoroughly involved. We ignore the fact that that's a totally undemocratic state simply because they're the oil purveyors, providers.

So that that, in turn, revolves around policies which relate to the State of Israel itself today in 1997, where there is tremendous pressure to go through with something called the Peace Process, which is, again, a rather naive or nonsensical concept when you're dealing with a medieval people like the Arabs, and even the Palestinian Arabs, who have no compunction about committing terror or blowing themselves up or whatever.

It may also be true that Jews do that sort of thing. There have been, of course, incidents when single Jews began to fire away at Arabs. However, it's never a and never has been and never will be a national or policy of any of the Jewish parties or Israeli parties.

So what we're dealing with is two unequal civilizations. And to negotiate a peace process is certainly ridiculous. I think Israel must preserve itself through its own power and military might. And that interference by others in how they should proceed to protect themselves is not really called for. And the only reason it's there is because of the oil card.

Now, from that standpoint again, we look at other naive policies. And we go back to the rise of Nazism. I did talk about the Kaiser and his infirmity. We looked at the four central figures of the Nazi Party. Adolf Hitler is psychotic; Hermann Goering, a glutton, despite the fact he was a so-called war ace of the First World War. That's really irrelevant.

We look at Joseph Goebbels, a man of very small stature with two club feet whose main concern was chasing actresses when he was in power. And then we talk about the philosopher Hesse, Rudolf Hess. These are four at really the central portion of the Nazi Party.

And when you think about it, that any nation, any individual listening to these people, viewing them, and viewing them as something that is something to behold or as models, you know right away that you've got a problem nation on your hands, which is what the German nation is, unfortunately. It's only been a nation since the advent of Bismarck, where they brought the various so-called "tribes" together. And it unfortunately has not developed into a nation such as the United States in more modern times or the British, despite the fact that there are flaws and faults in all of them.

But the German people are somewhat unique. It's always said that they're either at your feet or at your throat, which is probably true. I've seen them in both situations. When I was in the military, they were at your feet. When I was a Jew in Germany, they were at your throat. There isn't much in between, unfortunately.

They're very rigid. They're robotic. And in that sense, the Japanese also tend to be robotic. But they may have great philosophies they may have generated or sired important and successful people, composers, researchers, made great contributions. It doesn't necessarily flow from that-- the people as a whole, the ordinary people, the so-called "ordinary Germans," as many have now researched, and clearly show they will proceed to commit atrocities whenever they're called upon to do so.

This brings me to the point where we can talk about bureaucracy. People love to use that word, "bureaucracy." If there's anything-- Roosevelt said-- again, this is sort of a simplistic slogan. "One should fear nothing but fear itself." The fact is one should fear bureaucracy. That's probably the most dangerous thing one has to confront.

Bureaucracy, from my own experience in the American government for 30 years, is that the people that-- people, the bureaucracy-- adhere to the leadership. This is the people they follow and obey because their own interest is their own promotion and their own progress. And they know they can only get that by adhering to the will and the likes and the drift of their political leaders.

This makes them like Eichmann, a machine to perform and also one that will keep performing, regardless of what the change of leadership is. We now know for sure, certainly based on the book written by Daniel Goldhagen-- and his is one of the first and really only good explanations and thesis and concepts about what ordinary people will do, particularly in the case of the Germans-- is that once you leave a chore, a task, in the hands of a bureaucracy, it will be done to its very end. There's no stopping because the bureaucracy, once in motion, like the Newton's law, continues in motion. Nothing will stop them, and that's what exactly what happened.

So machinery would be going on today in Germany with the extermination of the Jews if there was-- unless they were totally curbed. The bureaucracy goes on under any leadership. So that's why we should certainly fear bureaucracy per se. And jokingly, I like to say we ought to take the bureaucracy out every four years and shoot them all and bring in totally new people, if for no other reason than to start the process over again in a stumbling way.

And of course, the American spirit is good in that respect since there is great distrust of government, which is well-placed. Government has a tendency to build its bureaucracy, as do other corporations, but government especially because it's not profit-oriented, but always personally oriented. That is the progress made by the individual in the government. That's what I have to say about bureaucracy.

As far as my career went, as we talked about the times that was-- that was in 1948 in the Montezuma Mountain School. [INAUDIBLE] went to get in the military in 1952 to 1954. I went back to college first to do a year's refresher at City College of San Francisco, because I was in engineering, which is kind of a tough thing to get back into once you've been out for a while.

I went back to the University of California, graduated as a mechanical engineer with architecture as a specialty and so-called social science as a minor, behavioral science, things of that nature. And graduated in 1957. Went to work for a Naval architect in San Francisco for approximately a year and a half, and worked again at Mayor Island for him in the submarine development-- guided missile submarines, nuclear powered-guided missiles.

And then that work all fizzled out as war contracts began to decline. And I went to work for United Airlines for a year.

And I was there when the jet fleet was introduced-- the first jet service between San Francisco and New York, the DC-8 jetliner. And then after a year there, and I came to Washington, DC because they offered me a job with the Maritime Administration, back in my old field, in 1960. And I arrived here on July the 1st, 1960 in Washington, DC.

And of course, my life had become less eventful after my arrival in the United States. The first 16 years of my life were those that were interesting. Some people say, gee, you didn't have a childhood. Or you didn't have a good teenage life. Well, what is a good teenage life? It's hard to define.

If one defines it in the American terms by going to high school and high school proms and things of that nature, yes, I didn't quite have that. However, in a way I look back, and if I compare the lives of people who I meet every day here and my life, I find that I've had a much more interesting life. I learned a lot.

One of my lessons I've learned is that self-reliance is the most important quality to have anywhere, any time-- anything from being able to put together scraps to build a fire or to repair something or to make something. I mean, when we were liberated in 1946-- I'm sorry, in 1945-- we had absolutely nothing. So what we did was I collected some old beer cans and put some wire around them to make handles and that we could drink from. That was our drinking implement.

Clothes-- I had this t-shirt which was shot full of holes from exploding shells. Well, I managed to get hold of-- I think it was a new Japanese Army uniform, the top part of it, the jacket. Well, it was a bit large for me, so I cut it back with a pair of scissors. And it turned out become like an Eisenhower jacket. And I wore that for some months. When it rained, I would wear the jacket.

And so even these basic things-- if you're able to manufacture something, put something together, repair something-- electrical, plumbing. I always find that to be quite enjoyable and, of course, very useful. And I found many of my other colleagues, American colleagues, would disdain from anything that's do with working by hand because I think they feel that that goes back to their ancestors, who had to work themselves up by using their hands. That was beyond them, beneath them, and so forth.

They were now-- whatever, professionals of some kind. That's one thing I don't believe in. I think it's good to learn how to work with your hands but also, of course, with your mind. So both are very, very important.

And if that can be inculcated in people, it always will give them a better chance of survival under any circumstances, whether it's war, whether it's a hurricane, or whether it's a flood or whatever. And also, if they find themselves without a job, they can suddenly become carpenters' helpers and whatever that way-- or paint or do whatever needs to be done in the society. And that, I think, was a very, very important lesson to be learned from the experience.

The other one, of course goes, again, back to self-reliance is in the area of the mind. I don't read too many newspapers these days, even though we have The Washington Post here in Washington, DC area. And it's supposed to be one of the best papers. I rarely read the paper.

I always find different papers have drifts. Also The San Francisco Examiner, when I go out to that area where I used to live, that seems to have a horrendously-- I would call it the liberal, left-wing drift, as does The Post. I happen to be not a liberal, nor a left-winger. Be that as it may, that's a good-- people have that view, that's fine.

But to me, TV news, newspapers, often represent personal views of those that present the news or the news bureaus, not necessarily the rational, logical, or truly realistic. And so therefore, one should take this with a grain of salt-- almost take it like an automobile commercial, because basically, that's the same vein that it's cast. So there is this caution in my head that that says, well, if I hear this, how much of this is really true? And what is drift? What is hype? What is pure lies?

And these days of the great spin, you cannot really believe anything the government tells you. Of course, I know from my own experience that they would spend an awful lot of time trying to figure out how to put together in a report to the public a news release so as to be sure that everything is well covered-up or covered, and that perhaps the so-called "real truth" is shaded in such a way that it will not reflect badly on those who are giving it or on the work of the bureaucracy. So that seems to occupy a great deal of the time of senior bureaucrats and the politicians as well.

So there is this caution about believing what you hear or what you see. That may sound a little bit paranoid. Perhaps it is. But I think that's the way one is built from this experience. That's what happens. One also then is not ever surprised.

One also has then the ability to judge a situation that is developing, a dangerous one or some crisis, with a great deal of calm, which is, again, very important because those that panic-- they will lose out. So if you remain calm and begin to logically assess what is happening and try to take action in good order, set up your priorities, do a sort of triage on the situation, you will be better off in the long run. You will also survive.

So here, what we are talking about is techniques, mental and physical, that let you learn from experiences like mine and, of course, from the experiences of many, many others who went through the Holocaust period and went through life. This is not limited to people from that particular period. Anyone who went through tough times-- people who went through the Depression in this country also have a certain view. They tend to be more thrifty, careful, whereas those who grew up in the more yuppie era are quite different. But it all is a reflection on one's experience, and that's all really one can gather from this.

As I go back now to the parallel life, I came to Washington, and I met my wife. As it turned out, she was born in Hamburg. She also has given oral history to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. And we married in 1963.

And as it turned out, we were both born on the very same day. And as a result, we're the same age, of course. And we had our child, a daughter, Michelle, in 1969. I'm sorry, I goofed all this up. We were married in 1966. Michelle was born in 1969. And I raced ahead by three years.

So, yes, she was born in 1969. And we've lived in the Washington area, of course, both of us, since the 1960s, which now in 1997 is 37 years. I often return home and to San Francisco, where my parents live. My father passed away in 1996, and my mother is living right now near San Francisco. And it is April, 1997.

But in all these years, our relationship with the Jewish community has been sort of off and on. My wife comes from an Orthodox home. She was one of five girls. Her father was a shoet, which he practiced in Hamburg and also later on in England.

But of course, since marriage here, me being a bit of an outsider to the religion, we do go to the synagogue on memorials for memorial services and perhaps once a year for the Rosh Hashanah services. And she may go more often at other times. However, as I say, we do not now belong to any Jewish synagogue.

We did belong to Eretz Israel and also once to Washington Hebrew during the time that my daughter was going through her Hebrew schooling, which she went to until she was age 13. But she chose not to be bat mitzvah, although she now has sort of-- I wouldn't say come back to the faith, but she's come back to very much of what has been my own philosophy of the Jewish Nation, since she's taking a graduate PhD degree, and her dissertation is on the subject of the role of Jews, particularly Jewish women, during the time of the Renaissance and in the Shakespearean era, which, if anything, is certainly a nationalistic view of Judaism.

And I had nothing to do with this. I never channeled her in that direction and refrained from advising or suggesting anything to her. But she has come to that point, which I find very interesting. So that is my situation as of this point.

I do want to at this point-- we're about ready to close, here. Or maybe Nancy has some more questions. But before she does, I do want to mention I want to thank Nancy Alper for having this tremendous amount of patience and sitting through here for I don't know how many hours. We had four sessions. She's been extremely patient. She's had excellent questions. She was extremely well-organized. And so it's really been my pleasure, and I'd like to thank her for doing this.

We've got to talk about your involvement at the Museum and your organization of the reunion for Jews who were living in the Philippines during the war. And the last specific topic that I was hoping to cover was your attempts to get recompense for the building that existed in East Berlin-- that exists in East Berlin and belonged to your family prior to

the Holocaust.

Yes, it is, of course, quite a long story. It has almost a subject in and of itself. This was a small, old apartment house with 10 apartments. And there also is a retail store-- orthopedic shoes or something like that-- on the ground floor. The building is located in a district called Weissensee, which is in the northern part of Berlin and was under the Eastern or Communist regime until 1990 or so, or '89, '90, when this whole-- the Communist side of Germany collapsed.

This building was purchased by a man called Abraham Schlimmer, who changed his name to Slimmer, when he emigrated to the United States sometime in the 1800s. He founded what we call the American branch of the Slimmer Clan. He was one of eight children of the Slimmers, the ancient Slimmers, born in Germany.

And he had a brother called [? Zaarly ?] Schlimmer, who lived in an apartment in that house. And then he had the rest of-- the six others were all girls, one of whom was my grandmother. And her name was Clara Schlimmer, but she married a veterinarian, my grandfather, whose name was [? Hyman, ?] so that's the [? Hyman ?] branch.

In addition, there was the [? Zimone ?] branch. That was a woman whose name was Cecilia Schlimmer married a doctor, [PERSONAL NAME]. They both perished in the Holocaust, he at Theresienstadt and she in Auschwitz thereafter. That's another branch.

Actually, the eighth person was another brother who died, who owned the house together with this Abe Schlimmer, but who died and left his property to all the other seven, I believe as well. Yes. In other words, the seven branches are the heirs of this one oldest brother.

So this house had been standing all these years. It was taken over. It was never actually formally taken over by the Nazis we found out. For some reason, the deed is in existence on record in the-- what is called the [GERMAN] the housing authority of the district of Weissensee. The lawyer that we have now has this document. It was never formally confiscated. So legally, it has always belonged to these seven heirs, original heirs-- my grandmother and her six brothers and sisters.

Well, this lawyer was got-- someone recommended him. He's from East Berlin. I've been working on this project since 1990, 1991-- almost six years I think by now. And the idea is to get this property back to the current heirs of all these seven branches. I have spent a lot of time identifying who the current heirs are by tracing through the families.

And there's, of course, my mother and my uncle and aunt. They're one of the branches. There are people living in Israel and London who are members of another branch. It's called-- we call the [? Manasseh ?] branch. This was the married name of one of the women heirs, original women heirs.

Then there is another branch, which the [? Simon ?] branch I mentioned before. Only about the fourth generation is left from that branch-- two young people in New York. And then there is another group.

Then the other three branches have died out. There were either no children, or in one case, was the man, [? Zaarly ?] Schlimmer, who committed suicide living in that house before he was taken by the-- before he could be taken by the Nazis. In fact, his funeral arrangements were made by the [? Zimone ?] people, who later would take him to Theresienstadt and she to Auschwitz because they lived in Berlin at that time.

So they had made the arrangements. I found that out by contacting, first of all, of course, the cemetery where he was buried, and then what they call the [GERMAN] like the vital health bureau, vital statistics bureau for that area of Weissensee. And they sent me all the documents because they had them and wanted some blanks filled in, which I did for them.

So three died out, branches-- four remaining branches. There are approximately 13 or so people, individuals, involved as being current heirs. But there's a long process to do all that. It requires heirship certificates by German courts. The lawyer's pursuing that.

And of course, in the meantime, we discovered that the housing authority of Weissensee, unbeknownst to the lawyer or anyone, turned this property over to the Jewish Claims Commission that is responsible for Jewish property that is not claimed. However, they were approached by the lawyer, and they have realized that there are people claiming the property. They had already, in the meantime, sold the house, the apartment house. So it is now a question though, I suppose, divvying up or getting the funds that were received.

This was not my original mission was to make this a monetary thing, because by the time it's divided up and lawyers' fees are taken, I don't know that the amounts are going to be all that much. It's more of the concept of returning this property, which was the family's, back into the family. Unfortunately, it's been sold. But still, I think we will try to perhaps put a little plaque on the house.

And certainly, for the man that committed suicide there, one of the seven original branch leaders, we'll get a gravestone and put it over his grave at the Weissensee, Cemetery, a Jewish cemetery, an enormous cemetery, where some-- where my grandfather, my father's father, is buried. And I did find his grave with a small gravestone, and where other members of the Schlimmer family are buried. It's quite a few members of both sides, from both sides of my family, are buried there.

Frank, why do you think that you were the one in the family who wanted to pursue this? Why do you think it ended up being you who were motivated enough to do it?

Well, my mother had talked about this house. In fact, they went to see it many, many years ago when they were visiting the area at the invitation of the Berlin government. They have a program where they invite people who had lived there back and so forth. And they did take advantage of it.

I don't know. I'm by nature a-- what do you call it? A researcher. I like to find things out. Excuse me. It's part of my training as an engineer. And I enjoy it as well. It's a challenge. Any kind of challenge-- that's for me, whatever it is, maybe physical or this kind or whatever or going on raids or missions. That's right up my alley. And as long as I'm physically fit, anyway, I can do all these things.

So my mother started that. She got hold of this lawyer, and she wrote me as to what the situation was. But it was a complicated project, searching through, having to obtain death certificates from God knows where, having to obtain birth certificates, wills, having to translate wills, tracing exactly what happened to whom along the way after all these-- that we go back here. This is my grandmother. And this is three generations. We have to deal sometimes with four generations' worth.

And then you have to talk to all these people. You have to call them up and inform them and ask them to do stuff for you. I mean, that was not my mother's bag at all. She's really-- be reticent in making contact with the American side of the family, for example, for God knows what reasons. I had no compunction about calling them up and explaining, identifying who I am.

And it's the same with the Israel-- people who live in Israel. There was one fellow who was fourth generation. His father was killed during the 1948 battle in Israel. He was a journalist. And so this young fellow-- well, he's about 40 now, I guess. I wrote him a letter, introduced myself. And then he wrote back.

And then we find we both had fax machines, so we were able to communicate by fax. And he went through a whole procedure that you have to go through to show that you are an heir-- at least to show that you're an heir of his father's and had to do that through the American consulate-- or through the German consulate-- I'm sorry-- in Israel. And so we've had to appear before German consulates to get these heirship affidavits written up and notarized and so on.

But I just felt that this was an interesting and challenging thing. Here is this apartment house, sitting there. If nothing was done, it would probably-- who knows-- end up in German hands, a piece of property that belonged to the family. Symbolic, really, more than a great value in real estate.

At the time, the lawyer quoted me a sort of value which really wasn't very much. It has apparently been sold for a lot

more, but still, being spread amongst so many people, it will not be a fortune by any means. Still, I'm the type that takes on-- I love to take on projects like that.

I go back to my work with the Maritime Administration in the government back in the Lyndon Johnson era with a young fellow by the name of Johnson, who headed up-- political head of the Maritime Administration. He was all of 29 years old, going on 30. Was a lawyer from a place in Iowa-- a very interesting, active guy, great to work with.

And he gave me the task of trying to come up with-- to develop the analysis to make a decision as to whether or not the United States should pursue a nuclear-powered merchant marine program. At that time, the USS Savannah was being used as an Atoms for Peace ship as a trial, as an experiment. And the question was, should nuclear power be put into merchant ships? Is that worthwhile? Is that feasible? Is that economically right?

So there I was. And I had to form myself a task force of experts in the various areas of trade routes and engineering and nuclear power and manning questions-- crewing and health and so on because you're dealing with nuclear radiation. And that was a fascinating project. We finished it in 1964, turned in the result.

The recommendation then, the result, was that it didn't appear to be economically feasible, and also with some technical questions. As one can see, there's been no nuclear-powered merchant fleet because it was certainly not economically feasible. So I like projects-- anything that builds up a challenge. I've always drifted toward that, whatever it may be.

Did it matter to you that your wife had also had a Holocaust experience, although obviously quite a different one? And I know a little bit about her background-- a very little bit. But did it matter to you and the two of you deciding to get married that you shared to some limited extent the same kind of experience? And if so, why?

Well, the answer to that is, yes, of course. There's this dual compatibility base. One is origin-- similar country, sort of similar experience, Holocaust-related, certainly. Jewish, obviously-- these brought forth cultural similarities, social similarities. I think we would have both, had we married-- and people have. It's quote, "Americans," Jews who had lived here a long time. It would have been a different relationship.

I think if I go back, having gone out with many girls and women that were Jewish-- local people born here. They, too, were different from myself-- a different experience, a different view of the world, different desires, needs that certainly would have been the base of some incompatibility, I suspect.

Although I've seen marriages between people like myself, who came here from other countries, to Americans, men or women-- it's neither here nor there-- also married out of their religion. And this has worked out well. There was no real problem. In fact, there's no-- I mentioned my uncle married a native-born American of the Episcopalian faith. And so in that standpoint, that's not insurmountable.

Nonetheless, I think one drifts toward the, again, birds of a feather. It is probably inevitable, if such a bird exists. In the case of no such birds, one would have to deal with a different flock. But then that, too-- one adjusts to that as well. I'm not sure whether that was necessary, but it did in fact happen. And the attraction was certainly a similar background. In any event, there's always a basis for that. And it may not have worked out. I mean, it could have not worked out, too.

Why don't you discuss a little bit your involvement with the Holocaust Museum as a volunteer and your organization of this reunion of the Philippine Jews, and in both cases, why you had felt compelled to do those activities?

Well, they're compatible with my way of thinking and lifestyle. The building of the Holocaust Museum in Washington certainly was a spectacular event. It was something that I really never expected to see happen.

After all, we're dealing here with a very Jewish-oriented suffering and history. What does that have to do with American-- with the American character or with American history? It didn't happen here. It's sitting on the Mall or close to the Mall. It was by an act of Congress, in many ways quite unusual.

And aside from that fact, of course the Holocaust-- this whole creation of a situation where Jews were persecuted

because of their religion and lifestyle-- did not have a national protector in any of these countries. To commemorate that, to memorialize it, it was extremely important for today's generation and the future. It spells out very clearly that the defense from such an [AUDIO OUT]

This interview is being made on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. This is an interview with Frank Ephraim by Nancy Alper. The date is April the 7th, 1997. And this is side B or the second side of tape number eight.

To return to the motive for being a volunteer at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is the very fact that this became to me a forum, a foundation, a base for educating the-- not only Jews, but anyone else because the experience is common. It is what happened to people who were vulnerable, vulnerable perhaps in part by their own hand because they did not have the strength or the means or the foresight or fortitude to organize themselves into a defense mechanism to defend society. Physical defense is what I'm talking about.

Jews have always said, when we were at prayer, anything can happen. We will not move from prayer. We believe in God. He will take care of us. They were wrong. None of that was true. They were slaughtered like lambs, you know? And when that occurs, that is the biggest lesson to learn-- the self-defense, the communal self-defense, last seen in Masada and before the time of Israel.

So this, too, is a fundamental concept of mine-- that to help that along, to support it, to help in any way, shape or form, that I saw being a volunteer there as exactly what I wanted to do. And I was looking towards also retirement from my government service. And I felt that this was be one of the finest ways that I could spend my time-- most interesting ways. It had all the elements that I'm interested in-- the concept, the philosophy, the research potential, any other work that would be-- that I could offer.

And so I had once inquired about being a volunteer, but they were still very disorganized. Their buildings were just under construction. And every morning, I drove by that area on my way to work to the Transportation Department in Southwest. And I saw the buildings, the originals being raised, and then the new building being constructed.

And then I finally-- I knew a person who lived here in the Town of Somerset who was also doing oral interview, oral history. And she kept me up to date because she was getting announcements as to volunteers were going to be asked to meet. Anyone want to be a volunteer? So I began to attend those sessions.

And we had meetings at lunch, and I would take off from work. And I would bring my lunch, and we would listen to the-- in those days was, Betsy [? McWhirt, ?] and also her name was Hill. She was coordinating the Visitor Services part of the museum. And eventually, they began to organize a volunteer training, which occurred before the museum opened.

And I attended those. I believe it was six or eight sessions that I attended. It was on Sundays because I was working still at that time. And I trained with all the other people. And pretty soon, we were asked-- this was mainly for the visitor service part of it. And we were told that we were going to be wearing these burgundy jackets, and so soon we were being fitted for jackets.

And so pretty soon, the museum opened. And we were asked to volunteer for the day of opening. And I volunteered for the candlelight portion of the evening. And that was my very first duty is as a volunteer. Oh, I'm not correct in that. It was even before the museum opened.

I'd had a call from a librarian in the library-- Sheri. And she said that she'd heard that I could speak German. And that, again, was done through Betsy, who was coordinating volunteer matters at the time, because she had interviewed me and found out that I did speak German and other things about me-- education, age, the whole bit.

So she says, gee, I could really use some help because I have a lot of journals that we need to go through and to index, which means translating the titles and doing a short abstract in English of the journal and whatever it contained. So I said, fine, I'll do that. So I went over, and she gave me a batch of them. And I did that for about six months or so and

produced a lot of these indices.

So I actually started both my volunteer work with the museum-- let's see. Museum opened in '93, so this must have been in early 1992. So as of today in 1997, we're talking five years as a volunteer. I have maintained my enthusiasm for it. I enjoy working with crowds and people. And I like the work on the floor, which is the Visitor Services part.

But I've also done work for the Education Department and worked with people there in things like planning and things like developing some kind of a scheme for the Outreach Education portion, where they deal with the various states and the schools in the states and trying to forge Holocaust education programs. In some States, these are actually mandated by the legislature. In other states, they're recommended by the legislature.

In many states, of course, there is no such thing, but there are groups, and there are individual schools and school districts that introduce the subject either in history or social science or in other courses as part of the course or as a segment of a course or as units or as an elective. And so in that area, I've done some work with the people there. Developing surveys and analyzing the surveys-- I will be doing that actually this year.

And I've also served-- this is my second term on the Volunteer Advisory Board. I was on the very first one that was formed, which again is advising the manager of volunteers as really a role and continue to do that. So that, too, is invigorating. It gets you back into the bureaucracy business.

And I always counsel the following-- be patient. And if things seem to go wrong in the museum, you must reflect on the fact that it's new and that it has had an overwhelming attendance and that it has served very well, given all that. And that if there's criticism about the people that are manning the place, that are in charge or responsible-- there have been criticisms by some volunteers, perhaps some of the survivors, that these people are-- they're not Jewish, and they don't have the experience. They don't know enough about Holocaust history.

I have found that to be not true at all. I think most people working there have a good appreciation of the Holocaust history and are very, very dedicated. Also, I don't think there's much base to such criticism.

My last question concerns the reunion that you helped to organize of the Jews who had been in the Philippines during the Holocaust.

Well, that was actually not my own thing. It began-- my mother, who has always been in contact with one of her friends-- they're from the Philippines. The lady has now passed on. But her daughter, who is married to a retired rabbi here in the United States, had made some exchange of letters with my mother.

And one aspect of it-- I think at one point, she was also in contact, of course, with other people her age and my age about the Philippines. We were the so-called teenage generation there-- the members of the [NON-ENGLISH] some of us. And she called me one day and says, you know, Frank, I've been thinking. I've been talking to Eva, which is another woman. Maybe we should have a reunion. What do you think of that idea?

Oh, that sounds like a good idea. That would be kind of fun. There are lots of people we haven't seen-- I certainly haven't seen for 50 years. Others, I have seen in the meantime. Yeah, OK, well, she decided to talk to them for a while. They said, well, we should have it in New York. She's from Connecticut, and these other people are from New York, so naturally in New York.

So I wrote back, well, we could have it in New York, but I said we could also have it in Washington. I said, after all, we have two things here which might be of interest. One is the Holocaust Museum. The other is the Philippine Embassy. And I don't know. We might be able to get something going there-- perhaps a visit or what. And I said I'd certainly try that. And so finally she wrote back. Oh, yeah, we had another discussion about the whole thing. And, yes, Washington would be a good place.

So at that point, we were in contact quite often. And we organized the reunion. The reunion took place-- let me see. It was October 19 through October 21, 1996. I had to make all the arrangements, of course, since I was local. I got the

hotel. And we did manage finally to get a session with the Philippine ambassador, which is kind of interesting, because when we went there, they didn't really know what to do with us. And we made a presentation.

We gave them a plaque. And that was designed to thank the Philippines for allowing us in, for giving us shelter, and so forth. And it was a plaque which had a picture of a temple on it and also the picture of this event that was held in the ruins to collect money on November 9, 1945.

So it had-- on the bottom, it says, "In Thanks for"-- and so and so forth-- plaque framed and everything. Well, the ambassador showed up. But before he showed up, they had us view a film, which was nothing more than a vacation-type commercial for coming to the Philippines to lay on those white beaches and that stuff. It was kind of interesting. Here are all these German and Austrian and other Jews. Rather than showing us something that dealt with the current situation in the Philippines or something like that, they showed us a travelogue, if you will.

That just points out that they were not really prepared for this kind of thing that we had in mind or that we would have liked. But again, you go with the flow. And certainly, they opened the embassy for us. The ambassador spent half an hour with us. They offered us coffee and cookies afterwards. And they were trying to be hospitable and all that, and that was very nice.

But the other thing we arranged-- and of course, for that day we ordered a bus to haul everyone about. And we [? saw ?] the private cars as well. Because from there, we were going to lunch. From there, we went to the Holocaust Museum, where we were welcomed by the person that's head of the Survivor Registry, Ioanid-- I think his name's Ioanid, Dr. Ioanid. Oh, Dr. Radu Ioanid, that's right.

And so that, of course, was very interesting. Some had been to the Holocaust Museum. They were from the New York area, had been there. We had one person coming all the way from Israel. And she does travel a lot, so it was on one of her trips.

And the other thing we had was, of course, at the hotel, we had in the first evening-- we had a reception, and we had dinner. And each person introduced themselves who was from the Philippines, who had been there. We had also attending one of the Army chaplains, who was very instrumental in founding the [INAUDIBLE] and helping the Jewish community.

And we had one other soldier there who was also part of the liberating force. He comes from Pottsville-- Pottstown, Pennsylvania. And he and his brother, Alvin-- forgot his last name now at the moment. But he was there as well.

We also had the people from the American side of the Manila Jewish community. We had two daughters of Alex Frieder there. And, yes, because there was a third daughter who lived right here in the town of Somerset who was married to the mayor. Accidentally when we first moved here, found out that her name had been Frieder, Louise Frieder, one of the daughters of Alex Frieder, whom I had mentioned much earlier as having been president of the Jewish community.

So we had the two Freiders here and a couple of other people who were of the so-called "American clan" of the Jewish community in the Philippines. And of course, they all spoke and introduced them. And I might add, one of them was Becky Konigsburg. Her father was the man that ran the Temple proceedings in Manila before the rabbi came.

And if I remember mentioning that he owned the bookstore, too, in Manila. She was there. And she was out of, I believe, Teaneck, New York-- New Jersey, I'm sorry-- State. She was there with her daughter. And some of the Frieders came with a younger-- with one or two daughters, and one of whom is at Berkeley-- lives in Berkeley, doesn't go to school anymore. And she did a lot of videotaping. We had several people do videotaping of the affair, various parts of the affair. So that was the first night.

And the second day-- why, let's see. What did we do the second day? We had a morning brunch, which lasted for four hours, where we exchanged memorabilia. We had pictures of ourselves and others during those days. And one woman who was now 85 years old-- she brought a [? mickan, ?] which was a bomb that went off very close to her. And it was a

piece like that.

And people brought lots of photos. And we laid them on these big tables that we had. And we all looked at them. And we all laughed about it and stuff like that. And we all told our life story since then at that brunch the next morning at the hotel.

And after that, we had some hours' break. And then I had everybody over here at my house. We had 60 people stuffed in here. And then we had a buffet dinner for that. And that was kind of fun. And then the next day was the last day, and that was the day we went in the morning by bus to the Philippine embassy, and then thereafter to lunch and to the Holocaust Museum. And that ended the reunion.

There are different views on the reunion. There were people there from the-- that were very young age, who were children at the time-- babies. In fact, one set was born in the United States of parents that were in the Philippines. There were people there up to the age of about 85, 86. Two women showed up that age. And so there was a range of people.

We were actually over 60 people, out of which about half or so had actually been in the Philippines. The others were spouses. So it was an exciting time. Some people said, oh, we'd like to do this again. Others said, no, this was once-- such a great affair. I'm not sure they wanted to do it again-- different opinions.

But since then, we've been in contact, some of us. And also we'll be meeting again, if we all can, here next month in May in New York. Two or three of us will be there at the same time for some other reasons, and so we'll meet again.

But it was a an exciting experience. Also, interesting, too, what's happened to people-- were we able to recognize one another? And interestingly enough, yeah, you could more or less tell who it was perhaps if you knew the people back in the Philippines. In some cases, I didn't remember them or what they looked like. But that was exciting. That was a unique experience.

I'm about to close the interview up. And I just wanted to ask you if there was anything else that you would like to add before I stop.

Well, you know, we've covered a lot of ground. And at the moment, I'm at a loss as to what else to talk about. And so I certainly will close instead of yakking along any further and so on. As I say again, it's been an excellent time. And I've enjoyed telling this story. I hope it's of value. And of course, there's so many others that have many things to say and to talk about.

But again, we go back to the fundamental lesson learned, and that is, again, the notion of Jews as a state, as a nation-- far more important than Jews as a religion. The religion can collapse on you. It's a bond, certainly. It is a common thread, but it is not something that will necessarily be with you in perpetuity because that's not a building block.

A nation represents not just the intellectuals, the physicians and the lawyers and the thinkers, but it really reflects what indeed is in large part occurring in the state of Israel, where Jews are in many fields-- farmers and what have you, policemen, laborers. Although, of course, they're using the Arabs for that quite a bit. Still, that is what builds a nation.

And that is what is survivability, and that is the best basis for any defense-- that is, in cases where Jews are under threat. So this is a primary conceptual philosophical lesson. The others, of course are the personal one again-- the ability to be self-sufficient, self-starting, and calm, cool, and collected. Cannot always be done. There's the human element, of course. But these are the sort of bases.

And again, the dangers that one confronts is that bureaucracy, the crowd, the formation of a crowd-- an interesting book is the *Crowds and Power* by Canetti, the Nobel Prize winner in 1981, who wrote about the crowd in other novels. But the development of crowds, which then turn into mobs, is a framework and also reflects what happened in Germany-- that from a bunch of ragamuffins, a bunch of freaks, generated a cult, Nazism, which could manipulate through pure power of speech on the part of Adolf Hitler and Goebbels and others a people who were vulnerable-- the Germans, that is-- and susceptible and easily molded to do things which the normal, civilized people-- even the aborigine in New

Guinea who led a downed pilot back to his base-- would not do. So this is something to keep in mind-- the degeneration of bureaucracy and the formation of crowds. These are one of the key dangers or flags one must watch for.

Thanks, Frank. This concludes the interview with Frank Ephraim on April the 7th, 1997.