

A continuation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Volunteer Collection interview with Fritz Gluckstein. Time this is tape 3, side A. And I'm curious to ask you about your reaction when you came to this country and you saw the way whites and Blacks in America related to each other. Given your background, what was your reaction to what you saw happening in this country?

Actually, in New York, when I first came, I knew there was a difference, but it wasn't quite obvious. You didn't have that much segregation. Later on, actually, once in Frederick, and even here in Washington, I was much more exposed to it. I still remember in Frederick, unofficially in the movie theater, the black upstairs, the whites downstairs. I still remember setting it. I was quite taken aback.

In Richmond, separate drinking fountains. I personally was quite taken aback. And certainly I was very much opposed to segregation. However, I was fortunate, in Minnesota there were some black students.

Ethel, my first wife, lived in a rooming house and there were some black girls there. And I got to know them well. And also I had some black colleagues. Actually, I had some contact and really, I couldn't do anything. But I was glad that the marches [?and felt] that the Jews had a high profile.

Did you follow the Eichmann Trial in Jerusalem?

I was aware of it and I followed it to a certain degree.

What were your thoughts and impressions?

There was one thing, being the son of a judge, that came to mind. How could the aggrieved judging Eichmann? I was glad they caught him, and I believe justice was done. But I still wondered if you are-- maybe it is splitting hairs. But actually if you-- at that time, it wasn't quite a parent, but later on-- have read books and actually if you follow-- they have video of the Eichmann trial-- I would see he was given a fair shake. But at that time, it came to mind.

Actually, there was an argument raised by the defense. You can't-- you are the aggrieved party. You can't sit here in judgment. I believe that was one [?note of] criticism. But then perhaps-- but I believe he was fortunate that he was given a trial at all. An accident could have befallen him just as easily.

Do you remember any reactions of other people around you during that trial?

No, I do not remember anything. Of course [?I did with] Eichmann, yes. So at first you had the Nuremberg Trials, yes. But I would assume I assume, I don't know for sure. Well, another trial, they finally caught another one of those. Then, of course, through the years a trial here, a trial there. I don't think many people were fully aware of the significance of what Eichmann actually did. Hitler, Keitel, and Goering, yes. But I wonder whether they realized.

And of course I was particularly interested since I spent some time working in his headquarters and even if not meet was standing close to him. By the way, they still didn't catch the real "makher," the fellow who ran that headquarters, his deputy, Rolf GÃ¼nther. I wonder what happened to him.

During your years in the US, you saw a lot of social and political change. What was your reaction to the war in Korea?

Actually, I would hope it would be over soon. As they all. And let's face it, if it hadn't been for my deferral, I probably would have owned up in Korea. I followed it, but of course really interesting when Truman fired MacArthur. In some way I agreed. Maybe I personally never like MacArthur for various reasons-- I was never an admirer of MacArthur.

But I was actually confirmed when the Chinese came in and what would happen, when will it be over? And of course the endless peace negotiations. I can only say that I was very glad when it finally was over.

How did the war in Vietnam compare, in your mind, to the war in Korea. Actually, sometimes I had wondered where I'll

be, what I'll be doing there. In my life probably we did not approve of people who refused to serve. I could see their point. But of course I feel that had I been called, I would have gone. I just wonder-- I actually question the wisdom of being there.

What about the years of conflict with the Soviet Union and the Cold War? I felt that it was difficult to deal with the mentality, the Soviet mentality. Some were easy. In fact [? I] was very surprised at finally the upheaval in the Soviet Union. Because I felt once you indoctrinate young people, it is very difficult to change things.

But actually, while I was concerned, I did not feel that it would come actually to armed confrontation. More or less my feeling-- I had no insight or special information, but I feel that many things that were said we read was propaganda to keep the people in line over there. That perhaps they really didn't mean it. But there, too, politics and such was definitely secondary.

I just asked you about wars and potential war. When you look back, in what ways did your childhood and your life experiences impact the way you reacted to those things that were happening?

Oh. To me, war is madness. They Start. Out for some reason or other, and pretty soon nobody knows what it's all about. We haven't learned anything from history. For some reason we called ourselves homo sapiens, the wise one, and we are so foolish. It's going on and on. And as you can see or have known it continues and will continue.

We can't live in peace? Why is that? There always has to be a fight. Be it for religion, for political reasons, what have you. It seems to be mankind can't live without war. I don't know way that is.

With respect to the situation in Israel, it had changed and is changing over the years. How have you seen those developments from your perspective, again with your life experience?

I think-- I believe then Israel has to and will remain despite efforts by others to destroy it. And the people that want to destroy it might as well realize the Jews won't go away. And there are too many of the [INAUDIBLE] religious reasons to, I hope, they come to a modus vivendi to a way to live with each other.

I always believe in order to understand Israel, you have to go there. Unless you have been in Israel, you really don't have feeling, really you don't have an understanding what it is all about. But right now, I am quite saddened what's happening.

You were in this country during the assassination of President Kennedy, the assassination of his brother, the assassination of Martin Luther King. How did you react to this violence in American society around you?

Maybe it might be a cliché, I was appalled. I was really shocked when it happened. But [INAUDIBLE] I sometimes wonder whether perhaps the American gun culture has anything to do with it. But I realize violence doesn't only occur in the United States. Unfortunately, homo sapiens is violent-- either wars or violence at home. I think things like this unfortunately happen.

But with Kennedy, I remember this day distinctly. I even knew what I was doing the moment when it happened. I was still with the Smithsonian Institution It was quite shocking. But one thing, despite all, life went on. There was an orderly transfer of government. I was very much impressed.

Has anything specific interested or concerned you in all these years in the United States that you've been here? Any causes that have culture attention or imagination?

But of course, integration-- what happened with the integration of schools. This actually was very dear to my heart. And I was very pleased that integration occurred.

And of course now, right now, I see it. Right now, immigration is relatively easy, but at one time, remember, what happened. Immigration was by no means easy. The waiting-- the quotas. Without quota, probably my parents would

have immigrated actually before the war.

But immigration policy-- but you realize, people say, well, we have to do something, illegal immigration and what have you. If I were a judge and would have to judge on immigration issues, I would recuse myself. For some reason-- an immigrant myself-- I simply haven't the heart to say and criticize other people. You can't come. I know there are certain problems, I realize that, but I can't.

I understand why they are coming and what they are seeking. And I've found a really group life. I'm very happy here. And how I can stand there and deny it to others?

Have you ever experienced anti-Semitism in the United States?

I would say no. Once surprise-- in New York, after coming, we are assigned to certain areas. I was sent to St. Paul, Minneapolis. Oh, some people, said, that is a hotbed of anti-Semitism. Never found any. Not at all.

There was one incident, one moment I thought, well, that is antisemitism. I had a caretaker position at the Hillel house. Next to us was a fraternity. Lo and behold, one night they got drunk there, and they started to throw stones and break the windows of the Hillel house.

Well, of course at that time a major investigation of what had happened. They all got drunk. They didn't realize-- they would have broken the window of any other. And of course they're very sorry. Even in order to show, they sent a contribution to the Jewish Home for the Aged and so on. And they made it very clear that while it was regrettable that it happened, but it was not in any way anti-Semitic.

And I believe them. They were just drunk. But otherwise, I can honestly say, I didn't.

What's your reaction to the resurgence of interest in the Holocaust in recent years?

I'm surprised. I'm glad. I think it's a good sign. But when I go and volunteer, I appear there usually at 9 o'clock. And people stand in line, and when I go to the back to the administrative building, I pass the line. And a few people there, all walks of life. And I can see obviously for the middle westerners, I wonder, what is the interest? Why are they here?

I wonder, maybe they have been asked, are they really interested? It just a curiosity to see it? But I'm glad they come. I think they must be reluctant to talk about it. I personally are-- and actually, Merrin always-- in fact, this interview, more or less Merrin suggested that I do it. I personally hesitate.

But I have more and more come to the conviction that particularly as long as survivors are alive, it is important that you speak out. Nothing is better than a first-hand experience, a first-hand report. I'm surprised at the interest, and I am pleased.

You just mentioned the people in line. You're talking about people in line waiting to see the United States Holocaust Memorial I assume.

Yes.

In your work there, which I'll ask you about in a minute, do you ever have a chance to speak to the public and ask them why they're there?

No, I never. I hope somebody will. But sometimes I actually want them to tell me, why are you here. But it might be misunderstood. And I don't think-- I'm hesitant doing it. But it ought to be done.

What do you do at the Holocaust Museum?

I'm translating documents and letters. Very often, people-- for instance, right now, when I translate letters, I send the

parents who have a daughter in England through the children transport. And they are writing what's going on. And actually, they'll write and mention people I know. They mentioned one of my very best friends. They mentioned the doctor I had. It's quite interesting.

And sometimes documents people write. For instance, what happens to people-- actually write their experiences. Romania, for instance, [INAUDIBLE] letter that they wrote shortly after they escaped or even while they still were there and smuggled out. Or correspondence from and actually to Auschwitz. In fact, some of the correspondence survived. The prison in Auschwitz for some reason was able to keep the letters. And the some of those letters had been given to the Holocaust Museum, and I'm translating those right now. Or some documents, even something for the Nuremberg Trial and so on. That's what I'm doing.

Have you donated anything to the museum?

Yes, some of my documents. For instance the permission to use the public transportation or my papers-- certain [INAUDIBLE] [? by doing ?] they forced work, they're cleaning up the air raids. I worked for a company and we had certain papers. And one time they had me in a local camp in Berlin, and they had the-- what would we call it-- Nazi release slip.

And something I found just not too long ago, the final report card from high school. It was in 1943. Well, it wasn't even a very good report card, but there was something on that report card which made it a document. Now, why was it a final-- it said on the proper final report card-- why? And I translate because of the disordered dissolution-- dissolution, that word-- of the Jewish school system. This was the last one after that, all schools were gone.

And I thought, this is quite something. At least we knew the date and everything. This I also gave to the Holocaust Museum. And some other-- in fact, I was surprised I had some Jewish stars left, the yellow ones. I kept one.

I wondered, don't you have many of those? No, they want them anyway. All right, I gave it to them and some other documents I had.

How do you respond when you hear Holocaust deniers?

I don't understand. Do they believe that all of the Holocaust survivors, they are lying? Make it up? To me, that is pure anti-Semitism, nothing else.

I cannot say-- I suspect that people, the deniers don't believe it themselves. I think they just want to deny it because they're an expression of the antipathy toward Jews. This is absolutely--

Do you think that the Jews in the United States need to be concerned about neo-Nazis, and skinheads, and all these other groups?

You shouldn't be ignore it. Perhaps concerned to the extent that don't ignore it. Know what they are doing. But I believe there is no reason for panic. I still believe what happened in Germany and some European countries will not happen here.

How has your experience during the Holocaust influenced the choices that you've made over the years?

Well, I tell you they led me-- I have two models, two things in my life came in front of me. One is Hillel's don't do unto others what you don't want to yourself. And the other is a proper translation of the saying carpe diem, which actually is usually incorrectly translated.

Because we retranslated Caesar. They know that that it is not correct. Because the full is "Carpe diem, quam minimum credula postero." What it means, pluck the day. Gather the flowers, pluck the cherries today, and don't or little trust the next one. Therefore, if you want to do something, do it today.

If you want to go on a trip, do it today. If you want to visit a friend, do it today. The time is today. If you have two bottles of wine, drink the better one first.

Has your view of Judaism changed since your childhood?

Probably not changed. In childhood you don't think very much about the reason. You go to services, and you do it. And well, I like the service or not. And I think you don't think too much about it.

But later on, I personally do not believe in what you would call deus ex machina, the supernatural suddenly happens. Perhaps I have become numb. In one way, although I am probably less religious as such, I feel more as a Jew.

I think there's actually more to it than just going to the services and keeping kosher what you have. I think being a Jew is-- well, I guess, we are more than the religion, and I am very conscious of it. But I believe you can be a Jew without [INAUDIBLE] religious. Some are and why not. That is your choice.

When you look back on yourself as a parent, do you see any relationship between your childhood and your experiences during the war and the way you raised your child?

No, I didn't. But I tried very much to keep my us of discipline, right and wrong, and propriety. But on the other hand, I tried to adapt to modern times. I realized a I had certain standards, but time changes. And you simply can't sit there, because I did it, because of what's appropriate when I was young it has to be still. I tried to go with the times.

Do you speak publicly about your experiences during the war?

Usually only if I'm being asked. I'm somewhat reluctant. But I can be persuaded. I don't make a show of being persuaded. Some people like to be persuaded and make a big show. No, no, and finally.

Well, Merrin pointed out, the live survivors have to speak out because it best counteracts the deniers. How can they deny first-hand experience?

Are you involved with any of the survivor groups in the area?

There is a survivor group at the Holocaust Museum which meets at certain intervals. And while I participant, I'm not an official or [INAUDIBLE] involved. But I take part, yes. We meet once a month. In fact, the last meeting was yesterday. I believe that would be the only extent I am involved.

And you said that meets with the Museum-- with the survivors in the Museum?

Yes, the volunteer survivors, we meet. There are quite a number of volunteers. Some are survivors, and the survivors actually have a special group, and we meet at certain intervals. And it is an interesting meeting, with various concerns and so on. Where too, we all agree, even if reluctant, and if we don't want to talk about it, we have to. Because we have to be a witness as long as we can.

Let me pause and I'll come back to this point. Just one minute. This is a continuation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Volunteer Collection interview with Fritz Gluckstein. This is tape 3 side B. And you had mentioned just a moment ago about the meetings that the survivors who are volunteers have at the Museum. Can you give me some insight as to the kinds of things that you all talk about when you meet?

For instance, we discuss the services of the Holocaust Museum, the exhibits, the publication. We also discuss where the information about the Holocaust will be spread and in what way. For instance, yesterday we had shown a video, Yad Vashem. And we discussed that and actually there was some I believe constructive criticism-- what should be done and why that particular video was good or it was not.

And very often we even discuss the reactions of people to the speakers. And very often there's a common complaint--

right now it's that people are invited to talk about the Holocaust and actually not given enough time. They are first being told, well, you talk for half an hour or 20 minutes. And when it comes down to it, well, we only have 10 minutes. You see, you have to be-- and this seems to be a quite frequent complaint. Perhaps not deliberately, but probably there is a special Memorial Day or some other occasion, and they simply don't give a schedule, and the people are then forced either to cut it short or actually only tell half of the story.

Matters like this are being discussed. And it's interesting, I guess [? and there were some ?] two new people from Bulgaria, Lithuania, and we talk among each other. And this is interesting-- each and every one of us has a different story. Absolutely. Yesterday too, we discussed First Person. It's an interview.

And actually it was discussed, and I went to one of the First Persons. I think it was most interesting. And I even on the advice of my good wife or urging off my good wife, I signed up for one in March too.

I need some clarification. You've mentioned your wife Ethel and you've mentioned your wife Merrin. Can you tell me first about Ethel.

Ethel I met in Minneapolis. Meet your spouse at the Hillel House. Well, I worked the Hillel House, lo and behold, Sundays they did the fraternities and did not serve meals for some reason. The Jewish students came to Hillel House to use the kitchen. I came downstairs and said, here's milkhik, here's flayshik, don't mix them up. Five minutes later, I come downstairs, everything is in shambles and mixed up.

Well, I was upset. And there was a redhead who said, now, what are you so upset? I said, look! Well, why don't you tell me about it. That was Ethel.

We married and '55 and had Ruth. And unfortunately I lost her to cancer after 38 years in '93. But I was fortunate and God kissed me on the eyes twice, and three years later in '96 I married Merrin.

How did you meet Merrin?

Merrin was the principal administrator at our synagogue. And Ethel used to teach recorder there. And, well, we knew each other, even friendly. We were good friends. That's the way I met.

Well, Ethel told me, Fritz, she said, get married again. Because you're not doing well alone.

I might want to also mention that your wife Merrin has done interviews of survivors.

Yes, very much. Actually, some we did together. I was kind of the timekeeper and took notes. If there was a word, I put it down. And she was very active. We do Baltimore, and actually it was very interesting to me. There too, each story is different. With the Shoah Foundation we worked quite a bit. Yes.

Have you had any recurring nightmares since World War II.

Occasionally, Yes.

Can you share?

Yes. [INAUDIBLE]. I don't know why. Sometimes actually doing the forced labor, sometimes the air raids. It comes occasionally. What very often happens, admitted, I translate letters, and sometimes-- I wouldn't say depressed, becomes remembered. And then I come home and I see the people sitting there.

[INAUDIBLE] Those of Romania didn't even know how bad it was. Right now, simple, they'll write to the daughter. Ah, yes, we are really touched about your concerns, that you tried some way to get us over to England. But, well, you see, we need the money. And then, yeah, maybe in your school you have some classmates who have rich and good parents who will vouch for them, give some money.

Naive, and they knew it. [INAUDIBLE] and you read. And it comes through they get the idea that you will not survive. And yesterday, what happened? I went to the library to look up something, and lo and behold somebody left the Berlin memorial book on the table. It gives the names, dates, people, in Berlin who were deported. And I have looked through there.

Actually, every year there's a reading of names at the Holocaust Museum. And actually I read names. I don't have to be given a special list. I have my names, [INAUDIBLE] [? some ?] [? I ?] remember.

And yesterday some came to mind when I was reading this-- going through the book. A young fellow, [INAUDIBLE] a young man reminded. My son-in-law reminds me of him-- looks and the way he acts. And just a two-year-old child, not even-- they killed them, all three. They come back somewhat, subdued. Yes, occasionally. I haven't forgotten it. No, I don't.

When you look back on all your years in the United States, what has been your biggest surprise, happiest surprise?

Surprise. Perhaps not surprise, but actually I might wonder sometimes, am I really made it? I was reasonably successful in my profession. And when I came over with 70 pounds, I was permitted to take hundred as I mentioned it, [? only] 70, I was somewhat apprehensive of what happened. Will I be able to make it? Language, what have you? And sometimes I look back-- look, it worked out.

But a surprise-- perhaps in some way that things turned out the way they did. Not that I was a pessimist at heart, but I've always been some kind of worries. Maybe not excessively so, but I was never happy go lucky.

What was your reaction when Joseph Lieberman was selected to be the Vice Presidential running mate for Al Gore?

Good. Finally. just a good idea. I wondered what is going to happen? Are they going to protect him? Every year at Shabbos he would go the same time the same way. What are they going to do? Otherwise, I was glad.

Actually, people said, oh. Yes, I knew it would be some anti-Semitism, but I didn't think it would be prevalent. And no, I was glad a Jew was nominated.

What has been your biggest disappointment in the United States?

Disappointment, I would say my main thing that I wish wouldn't be-- I feel what we have now, right now-- good manners seem to be out of fashion. For some reason, we abandoned good manners. And we have the [? contentious ?] litigation. Everything has to be sued.

And for some reason, even with our children, there is a time where you have-- we are so sort of careful that if you don't do it right-- and so we believe even children should have all the rights of adults or this. I don't think so. They don't need to be suppressed, they don't have to be tyrannical, but occasionally I think a little more discipline and good manners would be very helpful.

I think right now we are getting a little bit too liberal. Occasionally, certain guidelines have to be followed. I think if you want to lead a civilized life, we have to do with that, whether we like it or not.

What's next in store for you? What else would you like to accomplish?

Accomplish. Well, number 1, I don't want to be a burden to anyone. And I try right now-- I'm retired now, but I still try to be busy. Do simple volunteer work, even keep up my profession, do some writing.

But major accomplishment. well, I try to see you my grandchild grow up, try to see Merrin's children get established in their profession, and perhaps, occasionally, I can give a piece of advice, that'll make things easier. I think if I have accomplished all this, that would be a reasonable accomplishment.

On the other hand, to realize once you retire, you have to scale down your expectations. I still don't like retirement.

What would you like your family, friends, and listeners to know about you that they may not know about your war experiences? Is there anything that you haven't told them that you'd like them to know?

My war experiences, I can only say I was exceedingly fortunate. I was really lucky. My name actually, Gluckstein, Glückstein-- happy stone. Lucky stone-- glück. Not happy, lucky. I was lucky.

And without that, I wouldn't be here. I always say why I am still here-- I believe I mentioned it before-- three things-- because of my mother, who wasn't Jewish, that helped. Good luck-- very good luck. I always-- I can say I was never physically abused. And I mentioned it too, I got the temporary duty at Eichmann's headquarter. I was assigned to the best guy there. I still don't know what the man was doing there.

And third, Marshal Konev. He came in very fast before anything could be done to surviving Jews. And here I am. Always fortunate. Without good luck I would have never made it.

Is there anything else that you would like to add before we conclude the interview today? Anything that we didn't discuss that you'd like to bring up?

No, I don't think so. I at least I can't think of it right now. I think you've covered it. Right now there's nothing urgent that I really-- no.

OK. Well, I thank you very much for allowing me to do the interview on both days that I was here. And this concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Fritz Gluckstein. Thank you.

All right. We are back with a postscript to this interview. After we concluded, you told me that you're listed in American Men and Women of Science. There's a listing on you. And there's also listing on you in Who's Who in America. Can you tell me-- I will put these into your file-- me what this is about, how you became listed in the Who's Who and what they have listed as?

Usually you are listed because you are nominated. People think that you have accomplished something, that you are a distinguished representative for your profession and you're nominated. And I believe if enough nominations or the people who nominate you are prestigious scientists, you are put in to American Men of Science and also in Who's Who in America.

There's not much you can do about it. And I must say, I was pleased. I would be lying-- it was good for the ego, and I'm glad that happened.

And what did I say about you in these listings?

My field, primary information science. I was initial [INAUDIBLE] of medicine. And what happened, people-- it was know if somebody needed some information, particularly needed it fast, I usually could provide it. And apparently word got around that people liked it, and I had some colleagues who nominated me.

Would you care to comment about the current work that you're doing that I see in this folder?

[INAUDIBLE] I am, [INAUDIBLE] also I am-- actually, it's a specialty board, American Veterinary Preventive Medicine. Well, it was prior to that were called Veterinary Public Health. So it deals with animal diseases that also affect man, zoonoses, for instance like rabies, toxoplasmosis, or food inspection. In fact, many people don't know that the meat they eat are inspected by veterinarians. All aspects of veterinary medicine that affect man.

And I remember of the, their specialty I have to pass this examination. And I'm still interested in the zoonoses. I tried even to do some writing. Right now, of course, boy is it a popular field. But it is quite changed because of what



scientific writing has little to do with popular writing. Which actually is bad-- it should.

Have you ever been asked to comment on what's gone on in Europe with the mad cow disease? Have you ever been asked about mad cow disease?

Yes. I have been asked. But I am very careful. This is a very specialized field. There is a new concept actually, we know about-- people know about bacteria, they know about viruses, and now there is new-- actually, what it is a protein that is infectious. This is something very problematic and people who are much better qualified than I am are not quite clear what it is. But I'm very careful, because I hope we can solve the riddle. But I think we are coming close.

Is there anything else that you'd like to add? Any other folders that you'd like to open before I leave?

I don't think so.

I thank you, and I'm very glad that you remembered that at the last minute. This now concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Fritz Gluckstein. Thank you again.