

We're in our third season of First Person. And our first person today is Mr. Frank Ephraim. And you will meet Frank very shortly. First Person is a series of weekly conversations with survivors of the Holocaust who share with us firsthand their own experiences during the Holocaust and during World War II. Each First Person guest presently serves as a volunteer here in the museum, and we will have a First Person program each Wednesday until August 27th.

If you go to the museum's website, you will find a list of the upcoming First Person guests for the rest of this season and that website address is [www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org), that's [www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org).

This 2003 season of First Person is made possible through the generosity of the Woldenberg Foundation, to whom we are grateful for sponsoring this year's program. Frank Ephraim will share with us his first person account of his experience during the Holocaust for about 40 minutes. We will follow that with an opportunity for you to ask Frank some questions. Before I introduce you to Frank, I have a couple of requests of you.

First, it's our hope that you can stay seated throughout this one-hour program. That will minimize any disruptions while Frank is speaking. And secondly, if you have a question during our question and answer period, and we certainly hope that you will, please try to make your question as brief as you can. I will repeat the question to ensure everyone hears it, including Frank, and then Frank will respond to your question.

I'd like to let those of you who may be holding passes to the permanent exhibition for either 1:30 or 1:45 know that they are good for the rest of the afternoon. So you don't need to be concerned that if you stay till the end of the program that you won't be able to get into the permanent exhibition.

The Holocaust was the state sponsored systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jewry by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945. Jews were the primary victims. 6 million were murdered. Gypsies, the handicapped, and Poles were also targeted for destruction or decimation for racial, ethnic, or national reasons. Millions more, including homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Soviet prisoners of war, and political dissidents also suffered grievous oppression and death under Nazi tyranny.

In early 1939, just as Frank was turning eight years of age, his family left Berlin for the Far East. As you will hear today, their three-week trip by ship took them to Manila in the Philippines. They settled there. But their adjustment to a new life was upended by Japanese occupation in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor. As the tides of the war in the Pacific shifted, the Americans returned to the Philippines to drive the Japanese out.

Frank and his family and the others in their small Jewish community were then in the middle of the Battle for Manila, before eventual liberation by American forces. We have prepared a brief slide presentation to help with Frank's introduction. Here, we have in our first photograph, Frank as a young child.

Our first map highlights Germany in 1933. Frank was born on February 19, 1931, in Berlin, Germany. And our second map of Germany shows Berlin with the arrow pointing to the location of Berlin.

Kristallnacht, referred to as the Night of Broken Glass, took place on November 9th and 10th, 1938. Instigated primarily by Nazi party officials and Nazi storm-troopers, this violent anti-Jewish pogrom took place throughout Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia. Countless numbers of synagogues, Jewish owned businesses, community centers and homes were plundered and destroyed. Our map shows with the dots, show the locations throughout where Kristallnacht occurred, the synagogues that were destroyed during that night.

Our second photo or the photo here is of damage at a Jewish owned business during Kristallnacht. In February 1939, soon after Kristallnacht, Frank and his family left Germany. The Ephraim family emigrated to the Philippines. This map shows the areas of the world under control of Nazi Germany and Japan and their Allies in 1942. And our next map provides greater detail of Japanese expansion during those years. And a circle shows the location of the Philippines in East Asia.

Frank and his family stayed in the Philippines for eight years, including three years under Japanese occupation during

World War II. Frank learned to speak English while in Manila. When Frank was 15, his family emigrated to the United States, landing in San Francisco where he continued high school. He was drafted into the army during the Korean War, and later graduated from the University of California at Berkeley in mechanical engineering and Naval architecture.

Today, Frank and his wife Ruth, reside here in the Washington DC area. Frank is retired from a long career in public service as a Naval architect and in the transportation field. In addition to volunteering here in the museum, Frank has also in the past done consulting work for law enforcement agencies on transportation matters.

Frank and Ruth have a daughter who presently teaches literature at Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Massachusetts. And Frank and Ruth have a second grandchild on the way, and their first grandchild is two years old. I want to be sure to let you know that Frank has recently finished writing a book about the Jewish community in Manila during the war, titled *Escape to Manila*. It will be published by the University of Illinois Press in September. And he also has a Holocaust-based historical novel in the works.

You will find Frank here in the museum every other Saturday and Sunday as a volunteer in his burgundy jacket. He also leads guided tours for groups from law enforcement. And with that, I'd like to ask you to join me in welcoming our first person, Frank Ephraim. Frank, will you join me?

[APPLAUSE]

Perfect. Can you hear me?

Frank, thank you so much for your willingness to serve as our first person today. You were very young when Hitler came to power. You lived with your parents in Berlin for most of the 1930s as the situation for Jews became worse and worse. Maybe we could start with you telling us about those early years before you left Germany, what was like for you and your family in your community.

Sure. I was-- guess I first recall when I was about four or five years old and ready to go to school. In Germany, you don't start school till you're six years old. Although the word kindergarten is German. Kindergarten in Germany means nursery school. So about time, of course, I was aware of the fact that the Nazis were in power. Certainly, my parents as Jews, were under the gun of the regime.

They were already restricted in the kinds of work that they could do. My father had been a radio engineer. He was in the early development of radio, held several patents. But that had to be foregone, because that was no longer an area where he could work. So after a while, he worked also for an outfit that manufactured diesel locomotives for plantations, the narrow gauge railway. And after that, that was also restricted. And then he ended up in some kind of an outfit that exported textiles.

And he pretty much worked in that most of the time. We, of course, knew all the time all along that this was a place we had to leave. The thing that restricted us from leaving at the time was the fact that my paternal grandparents were alive, and my father didn't want to leave them there by themselves. But at some point, my grandfather died. And that after that, we began to think about-- we were ready to leave.

Frank, how large was your extended family?

Well, it was actually quite small. I was the only child. And I had at that time, my maternal grandparents had died in 1933 when I was two years old. And I don't remember them at all. We had relatives here in the United States. And there were some aunts and uncles, and so we were not a large family.

Frank, your father, tell us a little bit about this. He was actually a decorated veteran of the First World War.

That's my grandfather.

Grandfather?

Both grandfathers, served in the Kaiser's army in the First World War. My grandfather on my maternal grandfather was a major in the German army. He was with a cavalry regiment. He held the Iron Cross second class or something like that. And he fought that the Battle of Verdun in France, in the Battle of Tannenberg a famous battle in Russia First World War.

Frank, you just mentioned that your decision to leave really in many ways had to do with the death of your grandfather, allowing your father to make the decision to go. And that Kristallnacht itself was not the prompting event for the family to leave. Tell what really then made it possible for the family and your parents to decide to leave Germany?

Well, the pressure was getting very strong. There was no place to work. We were restricted. And I remember one time my father took me down to the railway station to take a look at the new trains that were coming in. And because of the movies, we were restricted. There were signs of no Jews allowed. The parks were restricted. And as you probably saw in the exhibit over here, there were benches that were painted, normally green park benches. So those were painted yellow with a J on it, restricted for Jews.

So the restrictions in terms of entertainment were full and complete. You could barely travel. Many cities had signs that didn't allow Jews to enter. So the restrictions were such, and people had been taken to concentration camps. Members of the extended family had been in places like Oranienburg, and Sachsenhausen concentration camps outside of Berlin, where they were taken. Initially, they were released until the war started. And then of course, they were all back there.

So my father many nights slept away from home just in the event the Nazis came and knocked at the door. And of course, he wasn't there. He slept at some spinster aunts, who put him up. And he would come home only if a light would flicker in the window that said it was safe to come back.

Had the all clear signal for him to come back.

Right. My mother, she would do that. So the situation was such that all along that we knew this was not going anywhere but downhill. And so he had long decided the time had come to leave, and every effort was made. It was difficult to get into the United States. You had to have an affidavit, financial support, and a quota number, which was a long wait for that. And eventually, the opportunity arose of a distant cousin of my mother's who lived in the Philippines, and managed to get us an affidavit, which was the financial guarantee that we would not be a burden on the state, which was really an American law.

Because the Philippines at the time was an American Commonwealth. And immigration laws were American immigration laws.

Frank, before we talk about your trip to the Philippines, on the night of Kristallnacht itself, I believe you told me earlier that the family was unaware that that was occurring on that actual night. How was that possible?

That happened because my grandfather and my paternal grandfather died the night before. And so the family was in mourning. We had, the radio was not on. Of course, there was no television in those days. And we had no other ways of communicating. We did not read the newspaper or anything like that. And so my father went to the synagogue which he belonged the next day to say a memorial prayer for his father. And as he arrived there, the synagogue had burned.

And there were fire engines and police, and so he was wondering know what was happening here, maybe an accidental fire. However, there was a man at the perimeter of the crowd whom he knew, and who he then approached. And then that's how he found out what had in fact happened that night, Crystal Night. That was how we discovered that. And he came home, of course, immediately and told us about it.

And then, of course, all the other things that you mentioned led to the decision to go. And as you looked at the opportunities to try to find a place that you could get to, that made it possible, you had a family member in the Philippines. A former governor of Indiana played a role, though, in helping you to do that. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

Yes, this was a man by the name of Paul McNutt. And he was the governor of Indiana. He was a Democrat, Democratic Party. And Paul McNutt actually was going to run for president on the Democratic ticket if FDR had not decided to run for his third term. He was very popular man, a great white mane of hair on him, a great speaker. But Roosevelt appointed him as High Commissioner in the Philippines. That was in 1938 or '39. I don't have that exactly in front of me.

But when he discovered that people were trying to get to the Philippines, arriving there any way they could, he actually went and decided that a program could be established which would allow a number of people to come in. And at that time, he had to fight the State Department which was not very happy with Jews coming, immigrants coming to the Philippines. And he got together with the President of the Philippines, Manuel Quezon at the time. And they actually worked out a scheme by which people of certain professions or trades were able to enter.

So he played a major role. Actually, the fact that people were trying to get to the Philippines was told him by a man who was the president of the Indiana Senate, whose brother had a connection to the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in New York. And that is how he was told initially about the fact that, hey, Paul McNutt, you're heading to the Philippines. Here is a problem for you.

And so in that way, he became involved. And he was instrumental, in fact, one of the very, very few American officials that actually stuck his neck out, if you will, to save people's lives.

And somebody, sadly, that most of us have never heard of. Frank, why don't you now tell us about your journey. The family leaves and, tell us about the trip itself, how you got there.

That was a pretty long trip in those days. Very few people flew. Although in my book, I covered one man who flew much of the way, which was very unusual in those days. We boarded a train at night in Berlin, and headed for Genoa, Italy. That took about a day and a half or so. And there we boarded a ship, an Italian liner that it and several other ships of that line, Lloyd Triestino by name. They're still in existence, by the way.

That ship took us to the Philippines. It was called Victoria, and I have a picture of it in the book, actually. And we boarded it. It was a beautiful white liner. And we traveled on what in those days was second class. It had three classes. And it took us three weeks. First stop was in Naples, from Genoa. Then we went through Port Said. We actually saw people who got to go ashore. At that time, the British held Egypt. The British were very reluctant to allow people with passports with a red J, meaning Jewish, to land in any of their territories.

So you had a German passport--

A German passport.

-- with a red J on it.

With a red J on it, yes. And you'll see some of those displayed upstairs in the exhibit, of course. And so Port Said, through the Suez Canal, up to Aden. And in Aden, my parents tried to go ashore, because another member, a very distant member of the family was buried there. He died on route. And but they couldn't go ashore. Again, the British would not allow anybody to go ashore in Aden, because they held as part of the British empire at the time.

And from Aden, well went through Sri Lanka, what is called now Colombo. And we sailed on, we did go ashore there. To Bombay, not allowed to go ashore there. To Singapore.

In Bombay, again, a British--

Same thing.

A British colony.

British-- a part of British empire, India. At that time Pakistan did not exist. They didn't allow us to go ashore. But lots of Indians came aboard. And in fact, there was an Indian family on board the ship starting in Genoa. They were well-to-do people, apparently. And he had been at medical care in Germany. And his wife and daughter accompanied him. And one morning, the wife, they always wore saris, beautiful saris. She came to breakfast with a green sari all decorated with white swastikas.

And of course, this ship was full of Jews heading out for Shanghai in the Philippines. And so everybody looked kind of at her. But she didn't realize, of course, what she was doing. And by lunchtime she changed, because she finally--

Got the message somehow.

Got the message somehow. And they were apologetic about it. But again, this was a symbol that the Nazis took over, appropriated, for their own use. It is not their own symbol. So we landed in Manila.

And in that whole trip, three weeks, you were only allowed to get off the ship one time. Am I correct?

One time. Actually, yes.

One time?

No actually two times, in Singapore as well. I had to go to a dentist in Singapore. I had a terrible toothache, and I remember that. And somehow--

So as an emergency.

--actually we got to go ashore.

But otherwise, mostly British places keeping you on board the ship.

That's right.

You arrive in Manila.

Yeah.

Tell us what life was like for you in the Philippines and in Manila.

Well, the temperature in Manila at that time, most of the time, is like it is here right now. It's hot and humid. And everybody wore white suits. That was the dress. But the people were laid back and friendly. And we were taken by this one relative who had given us this financial guarantee. And we stayed with him for about a week, and then we moved into a tiny apartment. And pretty soon, my father tried to get a job. We had to all learn to speak English.

That was, of course, difficult at first. They put me into a school, where I hadn't known a word. But again, in short order we did manage to learn. My father got a job. And life was beginning to come back to sort of a semi-normalcy, if you will.

We got to use to the country, which is very, very different from Berlin, Germany. The food, the atmosphere, the people. In a way, it was highly interesting adventures for me. Because I learned to meet lots of different people, played with lots of different kids from all over the world. And Americans, British, Dutch, Filipinos, Mestizos as people who were mixed race of Filipino and Spanish. Because Spain had owned the Philippines, if you will, for almost 400 years. And then ceded them to the United States after the Spanish-American war in 1898.

Which is why it was an American territory at that time.

American territory.

You had mentioned to me that, of course, what you said earlier about it being an American territory. And that, in fact, it was very Americanized. And what did that mean?

It was Americanized to the point where I all drank my first Coca-Cola, which I hated. God, what is this stuff? But I got used to that. And it was Americanized in the sense that American comic books were available, American movies. There were movie houses. In fact, it was the only place you could be cool. Because the large movie houses were air conditioned. Everything else was not. No one had air conditioning. So you sweated in the heat, and the mosquitoes bit you if you didn't have screened home.

And so that was rather uncomfortable, of course. But American products were about, American automobiles. Americans were there. The American military was there. General MacArthur was there. So it was an American colony. The Americans lived very well. They often had many, many servants, and cars, and chauffeurs. We didn't. We were you might say the first poor whites that the Filipinos ever saw. Because all the others who were from Caucasian countries were usually well-off. They were in business, or they owned plantations. So that was an interesting contrast for them.

How large was the Jewish community in Manila?

In my book, I have the list of names of almost 1,300 people who were refugees. In addition, there were some 500 who were there already. These were American Jews. They were people from Russia, Poland, who had drifted through China, ended up in the Philippines, mostly as traders. But they also had to escape pogroms from Poland and Russia. They had come there at the turn of the century.

Then there was a fairly sizable Sephardic community, people who had come from Turkey and Syria, who had settled in the Philippines. In fact, in my research, I discovered that Marranos, those are people who escaped the Spanish Inquisition and changed religion, had also settled in the Philippines in the 17th century. But of course, they were no longer there by the time I got there.

So there was this mix of people. We had a synagogue. It was built in 1924 by the then existing community. And it was actually-- I'll cover that a little later. So that was the Jewish community. And by the time we got there, they had a rabbi who had come from Germany.

Frank, was the Jewish community pretty much limited to Manila, or where there synagogues elsewhere in the Philippines?

No synagogues elsewhere. Some Jews that had settled outside of Manila, that was encouraged. Because again, trying to get jobs for people was difficult, particularly if you didn't speak the language, or if you had skills. If you were a lawyer, you were in trouble, which is kind of interesting thinking back. People who had PhDs or doctorates in law could not really practice in the Philippines. The same with doctors. There was a resistance to have doctors practice there, because they were in competition with Filipino physicians to a point. Although they did help work with Filipino physicians a lot.

So there were people that settled outside of Manila, doing all kinds of things, plantations, dirt farming, whatever. In fact, the kinds of jobs that the word unemployment certainly was unknown to us, because we never used it. I mean if you didn't have a job, you went to work elsewhere. You'd have to feed your family. There was no whining about that, unless you were, of course, very ill or were very old, when you could not work. Everyone else did something, whatever, in order to feed their families. So there was no real welfare, as such.

Frank, and so here you're living this life, of course, that is in a very American style, so to speak. But then of course Pearl Harbor happens. And I think many of us lose sight of the fact that while Japan was attacking Pearl Harbor, their forces were attacking elsewhere throughout the Pacific, and certainly including the Philippines. And what can you tell us about that, the Japanese attack and occupation of the Philippines? You were there.

Yes. We heard about it on December the 8th, because the Philippines are a day ahead my international date line. So that morning on my way to school, the newspaper talked about the attack on Pearl Harbor. Most of us didn't know where Pearl Harbor was. We'd never even thought of Hawaii. It was some kind of tropical paradise, well beyond our means and reach. So we tried to pinpoint where that was.

But then by midday, they sent us home from school. And that night, the Japanese bombed Manila. The first air raid siren, we all went downstairs. There's no way to dig in the city of Manila. If you dig three feet, you reach water. So you crawled under the house.

So no bomb shelters?

No bomb shelters, no. And there was really a surprise attack. Anyway, so then after a while the all clear sounded. And we figured, oh well, everything seems to be working all right. They told us that the Boy Scouts were in charge of the area alarms, and they seemed to be working OK. However, two hours later, we were awakened by an attack. They'd come in. 27 Japanese planes attacked Manila, sank ships in the harbor, and destroyed airplanes, American airplanes on the ground. And from then on, they would come regularly.

And meanwhile, the Japanese were landing. In October, I believe, it was they landed in the northern part of the Philippines, in Lingayen Gulf, if anyone of you are World War II buffs. They landed there with a force of some altogether there and also in the Southern part of the main Island, and began to invade the Philippines. And of course, many of you have heard of Corregidor and Bataan. This was the last defense of the United States.

They had to surrender those two places, and thereupon was the death march. The Japanese conquered the Philippines and entered Manila. And it was declared an open city by the Americans to avoid unnecessary bloodshed, slaying of civilians.

What did that mean to declare it an open city.

It meant at the time that the American forces would leave the city, and allow the Japanese forces to enter unopposed.

And avoid urban warfare in that location.

That's right.

And so the American forces leave and in come the Japanese.

In come the Japanese.

What was that like?

That was like, it was very scary. A couple of us used to play soccer or football as we call it, out near the sea where the Manila Bay is. There was a boulevard that runs along it. And we lived very close by in little tiny apartments. And the first thing we saw was buses which are open on a side, of the type they use in the tropics. And they had soldiers in them. And we didn't know who they were. But parents would come out, and tell us to come on in, because they thought the Japanese were entering.

And that night, there was a lot of looting going on because the Americans had opened the quartermaster corps and allowed the population to go in there and take whatever they wished. And that then transferred itself to the looting of homes. So people began to guard the area. Several people were guarding our area, and they, in the middle of the night were approached by a squad of Japanese troops who said to them by sign language, that they can go home. They're going to do the guarding.

Because lots of Americans were living in that area, and they wanted to hold the Americans in place. So that was the first entry. And the first thing is the Japanese declared martial law, which means that anyone did anything that they didn't

like, they'd shoot you which they did. And they had guards placed all over the city. You couldn't go in and out, like you had to show passes or whatever. And since no one had a pass of any kind, you stayed put.

Frank, you told me that the Japanese army, a lot of them, they were bicycle brigades, Japanese soldiers on bicycles. And that you and your friends did your best to harass them. Tell us a little bit about that.

That was the fun thing to do because Japanese had these Japanese quality bicycles, the quality is very, very poor. It's not like today. And the tires were very, very thin. And they would come in groups of about 200 or 400 Japanese on the wrong side of the street. In Japan, they drive on the left side. So they came down and we would by phone hear from others up a ways that this group was coming. So we would gather little tiny fragments of nails or glass or whatever we could find, and run across the road where they would come and spread that around.

And sure enough, they would pop the bikes like anything. We reduced them to one half in terms of being-- and stood there and watched them.

But in fact, that was not viewed as a childish prank by the Japanese.

No.

They took that rather seriously, didn't they?

Yeah, if they caught you, you were in trouble. But we were kids. We were like, well at that time 11. And so we just stared, and gave no-- we didn't display any emotion, or didn't give any impression. We just watched them go by.

No high fives or--

Nothing like that.

As they were falling off their bikes, I'm sure.

No, they would jump off, and then the guy with a broken bike would hop on the back of the other one, and the third one would tow the bike with the flat tires.

Frank, there were also non-Jewish Germans in Manila as well.

Yes.

American and other foreign nationals, except for Germans and Austrians were interned by the Japanese. Did that enable you to live for a while, at least? Were you able to live in the kind of freely in the economy under martial law, but to not be interned like others were?

Yes. That was an advantage, at least at the beginning, where you could do that because these people were mainly about 4,000 or 5,000 people were interned-- Americans, British, Dutch, Poles. And those of us who held these German-- which the German passports had already run out. But to the Japanese who were not able to read them, and the red J did not mean anything to them. They saw the swastika on the cover. And so they usually let us by.

And also the rabbi who was then put in charge of the community, he negotiated with the Japanese that those who were Austrian and German would be classified as third-party nationals, which means people who were, quote, "neutral" and were not in the belligerent side of Americans, nor on their side necessarily. Japanese knew on whose side we were on, no question about that. There's research done on it. There's no doubt about it. But they let that go.

So as a result, we were not interned. And that allowed us initially, everybody had lost their jobs because most of them had worked for American firms. So we were down to making whatever, growing stuff in little victory gardens, and selling whatever he had brought with us, silver, or plates, or whatever. That's how you began to make a living, if you



will.

Yet, there were some Jews that were interned. What did that mean for them? Well, they were interned because they were American citizens, or British, or Polish, or Romanian. Those were people that were fighting the Germans and the Japanese. So for them, it meant eventually starvation rations. And they came out of that looking like skeletons. I don't know if you've seen pictures of American POWs in the Philippines. They came out like skeletons.

70,000 American soldiers surrendered and were marched some 5,000 or 10,000 and exact numbers not clear, perished just along the march, amongst the others probably half perished in the POW camps. The rabbi was unable to reach these people. They were not allowed to come near. But what we were able to do at times, we were able to get close enough with bicycles and stuff to get some food thrown over the fence, or to bribe some of the Japanese guards to bring food in. But that was the same with the internees as well as the American prisoners of war.

So if you were another nationality, American of course, but British, or Dutch, and Jewish, you were interned like Dutch, British.

Exactly. They went by nationality.

They went by nationality.

Yeah, not by religion, which was quite interesting that point. The Jewish community was small enough for the Japanese not to, quote, "bother." They were occupied certainly after a couple of years of occupation, they were well occupied with other things. Because they were losing. And so they were busy.

They were busy stealing everything they could. And they robbed the Philippines of everything they had. They stole food and whatever they could get. Every automobile was immediately taken. Homeless people were thrown out of their homes and apartments. They moved in. And so it was a total occupation.

You mentioned, of course, Frank, that the Japanese were losing the war at that point, and the tides of the war were shifting. And so eventually then MacArthur did return. American forces are coming back to the Philippines. And you and the Jewish community along with the residents of Manila then found yourself really caught in the middle. Tell us about that time.

Yeah, the time was beginning now in 1944, the first air raids of American forces, Naval forces, came September 21, I believe the date was, 1944. Bombed Manila by surprise. The Japanese had announced there it would be an anti-aircraft practice with some anti-aircraft firing. And so sure enough, I was home from school. And we could hear that, the [NON-ENGLISH], and just didn't bother looking out the window.

But after a while, it got kind of heavy. So I went outside and I see these black puffs in the sky, and I see that's the real flak, real anti-aircraft shells exploding. And pretty soon I saw an airplane come down on fire. So I figured this is some practice. And what it turned out to be was a surprise attack by 400 American Naval planes on Manila and the environments. And that they sank every ship in the harbor. And they were essentially on their way back. But it took quite a while till they landed again, the same place the Japanese had landed, and fought their way into Manila with several divisions of troops.

The Battle of Manila, if I cover that, lasted one whole month. And it was the second largest urban battle of the Second World War, following the biggest one, which was Stalingrad. And the destruction of Manila was second only to the destruction of Warsaw in the Second World War. And the synagogue was blown up by the Japanese, was burned. And it was the only synagogue under the American flag that was lost in the Second World War.

So the battle itself took the lives of 100,000 civilians on that month. And we were right in the middle of it. So we were in under artillery fire, mortar fire, until we finally crawled forward and met the first American patrol, the point of American unit that was coming toward us. And of the community, we lost 67 people killed in the battle, 200 wounded.

Just out of the Jewish community?

Just out of the Jewish community, yeah. So the whole, of course, over 100,000 people.

So this notion of an open city that it began with, it became the absolute opposite.

The absolute opposite. And there was a dispute between Japanese commanders-- the Japanese military commander, army commander General Yamashita. He had moved out of the city with his staff, moved up to the mountainous areas of the main Island of Luzon. However, the Japanese Admiral of the area, Iwabuchi by name, decided that Manila would be a very good fortress. And that he decided to defend it, moved in what they called Japanese landing units. I don't want to call them Marines. I don't want to insult the Marine Corps.

And they moved in, about several thousands of them, plus other miscellaneous forces, naval forces. And they defended Manila to the last man. The only American, the captives, the prisoners, very few prisoners were taken, and the only ones taken were Korean, and foremost were Taiwanese, which had been forced to join the Japanese army. But they fought to the last man essentially. And it was street battles, and so enormous, some 45,000 rounds fell into city of Manila, artillery rounds.

Frank, and one of those almost got you, almost a direct hit. Tell us about that.

Right. We had to get out of the house because the Japanese had decided to burn the city down. So block by block, the fires and we looked out the window, and then we saw next to us on the street some wooden bungalows that were going up in flames. And so we decided it's time for us to get out of the house. We were ready. We had a little cart and some stuff to carry it to a field nearby. And that night, the whole place burned down. Our house, for some reason, we closed all the windows and doors. So it didn't burn. But it stood there by itself.

In the middle of a burned out lot.

Yeah. And artillery shells were going into it. You see the holes. But we stayed in the open, and under artillery fire, we built a little shelter out of mattresses against a wall. And then one day-- we were out there for about a week under artillery fire.

In a field?

In a field.

Open field?

A field, yeah. And people were dying all around us. They were being constantly buried you know but by tens or hundreds or whatever. So one day, the bombardment got very heavy and mortar shells fell. You could hear that was a mortar shell. And I decided, let's move out of this mattress covered thing into a little dugout, which neighbors had dug. It was about three feet deep, just barely above the water.

We snuck in there, and then about 10 seconds later, a tremendous explosion. And after the bombardment had stopped, we went out. The shelter we had been in was just one big hole, nothing left.

Literally moments before.

Yeah.

Yeah.

Yeah, we have a souvenir, a pewter kettle, tea kettle that we had taken with us. And weeks later when we went back to the scene, we found the kettle with its lid off, and I still have it.

You still have it.

It's so full of shrapnel holes that the lids off, the spout have been sliced, and it was sort of a reminder of that battle.

So as you've described, Manila was virtually laid to waste.

Yes.

I think we probably can all conjure scenes of that. You're alive. Your family is still intact in this field. And then at some point you actually-- your dad encounters some American soldiers.

Yes.

What happened?

Well, we were sitting there, and under the heavy sun, there was some more shells flying over. We now hear machine gun and rifle fire, which meant to us there's obviously Americans, hopefully must be close by. So people were gathering near the road. And there was a Filipino, and he was holding a Red Cross flag. It was all bloodied. And he was talking to the Japanese officer I believe. And people are beginning to gather at the corner. They were coming from these two large fields, 2,000 or 3,000 people.

And at one point, everybody started to just get up and head down the road. And that was like from Dante's hell or whatever. There were overturned cars, there were dead animals, dead bodies, and the smell of smoke. Nothing but ruins, you couldn't recognize streets or anything. So we started running in that direction where we thought the shots were coming from. Then more gunfire opened up. We hit the ground crawled forward. And then got up and ran some more.

And pretty soon, we got to a street, a corner which looked like all desolate. And again, we were on the ground. And we see some soldiers ahead of us. They were wearing these steel helmets, and my father looks up, and he says oh my God. He says, Germans. Reason being we did not know that the American army had changed the shape of the steel helmets. We were with the flat tops that they wore in the First World War, that's how the American army left. We figured that's the way we'd come back. We hadn't seen those new big pots.

So he thought they were German soldiers.

And they were-- because of the shape of the steel helmet. Oh my God, you were dazed. You hadn't eaten for a week or whatever. You saw these people, and maybe there was a German parachute regiment that had come in to help the Japanese defend Manila. And these guys were dressed like this. So that was the first impression. They all looked-- and of course, then they said-- they spoke English.

Well, that was an improvement. So they say, come across the line quickly. Don't step on the wires, because they were hooked up by field telephone to the rear. There was three men. One with a machine gun, one with a rifle, and one with [INAUDIBLE], that was across. So that's how we cross the line, and together with the other people, some of them severely wounded. Some had to be carried very bloody. So that's how we first--

So that was liberation?

That was liberation. Yes.

Yeah. And then what happened after that?

Well, we kept walking, and then eventually, we were picked up by Philippine guerrillas. These were people who were wearing all sorts amount of uniforms, and had their rank on a red ribbon, a red band on their shoulder. And they were wondering what we were doing there. We were, of course, whites in a field, the land of people were Malays. And we

had these German passports. That was our only ID. So gee, wow, the enemy again.

But they knew who we were. And so he took us to an American. Eventually they took us to an American field headquarters, what they call a S2, which is the intelligence section of a battalion or regiment. And they checked this out. And they put us on a truck, and took us to the Holy Ghost College, which was run by nuns. And many of them were German nuns. And so we sheltered there.

A lot of ironies in this situation.

It was really weird.

Yeah.

Yeah, the Philippines when the Spaniards left in 1898, there was a vacuum. Because it was a very highly-- Philippines, it's the only Christian country in Asia. It's all Catholic pretty much, 95%. And when the Spanish orders left, the Friars and so on, German orders arrived, Jesuits. In fact, I went to school in a place where taught by Jesuit brothers, many of whom were Germans, German nationals. And the irony there was that during the war, only the ones that were German or Hungarian were allowed to teach. Those who were American, British, were not allowed to teach, had to leave the city.

And during the battle, with all the atrocities that had occurred in the battle. Japanese ran amok. They killed people left and right of our community. Most of those 67 were murdered by the Japanese. They murdered the German brothers. You know? But the American and British ones were safe, because they were outside the city. There's no rhyme or reason. Only there was one survivor, one brother survived.

And these German nuns patched up your wounds?

Yeah.

Is that right?

Yeah.

Just as a reminder for all of us, you were what? 14 years of age at this point?

I was 14 years old, yes.

14 years of age. And so did you stay there with the Americans at that point?

Well, in the camp we stayed there for several weeks, until they told us to get out because that was going to be used to intern Germans and Italians. So we had to get out and find our own place, and the community then decided to rent some houses, which they made into homes. We were crammed in with other people in a room. It was quite a while. We lived off the American army-- food, because that was the only place to get anything to eat. They were very extremely generous. And they later on had-- they gave us corned beef, and corned beef hash to us, and this was like-- this was like steak, and fish in cans.

Spam.

Yeah, Spam, fantastic. And then pilchards, that's the food, the fish that they used for bait. That was canned. We ate that too, you know? So we feasted on all these good things. Because we were all pretty thin. I was 14 years old and I weighed all of 70 pounds. So I'd eaten for a while. And so that was good stuff. And the candy bars. And they had special tropical candy bars. They were Hershey. They were chocolate. And they were mixed in with some kind of a grain that would not melt in the sun, because you're dealing with the tropics and no refrigeration. The soldiers would have in their pockets as sort of a pick me up type of ration.

Frank, I believe you said to me that some members of the Jewish community ended up testifying in war crimes trials after the war.

Yes.

Can you say a little about that?

In the case of General Yamashita, somebody pronounced Yamashita. But he's called Yamashita. He was once called the Tiger of Malaya, because he was very victorious in the early part of the war. And he was the man that captured Singapore from the British. He was later put in as commander and the Philippines, was the fourth commander, Japanese commander there.

He was considered a war criminal, because he allowed these atrocities to happen, and they were widely documented as tons of it in the National Archives, each case. I've used that material as well. Our case, we had a man that took shelter in the Red Cross building in Manila with eight other Jewish refugees, amongst other people as well, of course. The Japanese came in there and they chased them, so they took shelter in the women's lavatory. And there they murdered them, bayoneted them, usually. He was bayoneted as well, three jabs in the lower part here. And he played dead until they left.

But he slept, and so he wouldn't feel the pain, and he survived, the only man of that group of eight people who survived the massacre. And I knew him well. In fact, I interviewed his widow. He died at the age of 70. But he wrote about his story. And he testified. The testimony is in the National Archives, together with several other cases. So he was lucky.

We had other people that were taken to the Japanese secret police headquarters in a place called Fort Santiago in Manila, and put in dungeons there, and tortured. I managed to get one survivor of that in Texas. And he told me his story. So they accused them of being foreign agents, unjustly. They had nothing to do with intelligence or espionage. But they managed to take 12 such people, tortured them all, three died, and the others did manage to survive.

Frank, I want to get while we have some-- when the Japanese came, when the US took the Philippines back, and then of course when you came to the United States arriving in San Francisco, tell us what you had to do, to again re-establish yourself. Still you're very young. And your dad, again, and your mom are starting a new life in the United States.

This time, the ship that took us from the Philippines to San Francisco was all 17 days at sea, was an old victory ship, that many of which were built during Second World War. It was empty. And we were in what was then the gun crew's quarters back aft on the stern. And the ship ran--

You sound like a Navy man. That's for sure.

That's my feeling. And the ship began to-- it lost power somewhere right near the Philippines, leaving the Philippines. And it was swaying back and forth, rolling badly. And it was about to drift ashore. It dropped both anchors, and the captain decided to run an Emergency SOS on Greenwich zero time, and he took the American flag, hung it up, upside down, which is a distress signal. And then eventually at night a Navy ship came by and blinked at us, and we couldn't blink back. We had no power. So they sent a guy up with semaphore flags to communicate.

We eventually restored power, and we made it to San Francisco safely after 17 days at sea on this ship. Then we landed in San Francisco. Again, we had a very distant relative there, and he met us at the pier, as did somebody from the relief organizations, put us up in a hotel. And my father had already gotten back into business a little bit in the Philippines importing stuff. And he was going to continue that from San Francisco. But he did different things in San Francisco till he finally ended up in the wholesale eyeglass frame business, where he was pretty much on his own, traveled all over California, and sold eyeglass frames, and reestablished himself.

I went to school and finished school. I kept not going to school during all this period of time. I was lucky. A good thing in the Philippines, you go up to the sixth grade, and from the sixth grade you go into high school. I had gotten to the first

year of high school. Had I not, I would have had to take seventh and eighth.

Eighth, ninth grade over again.

And I graduated from high school at the age of 21 luckily. I was a sophomore and entered school in San Francisco.

One of the things that you got involved in San Francisco was to welcome Jews that were coming from Shanghai.

Right.

Can you say a bit about that?

Shanghai, as some of you may know, that was a refuge for some 17,000 Jews from Europe. Poland, those came across Russia, Germany, Austria, Hungary, et cetera, 17,000 people. And in 1948, some of them, of course, were leaving right after the war, managed to get to the United States, to Australia, wherever.

But in 1948, the Chinese communists under Mao Zedong captured much of China, including Shanghai. And these people had to leave. So now where do they go? So there were all kinds of arranged marriages between people who were Polish and people who were German, because the German quota was relatively open. Not many Germans were coming to the United States. But the Polish quota was up to here. You couldn't get in. So by these marriages and arrangements these people were all able to get to the United States.

And they were packed on large ships, ex-American troop ships. And like the General Gordon, General Meigs, were the names of some of them. And they arrived in San Francisco. And they arrived there, about 2,000 or 3,000 on one ship. So arrangements had been made to house everybody, to feed everybody, to get people jobs, to perhaps send them to other parts of the United States where they could get jobs easier than in, say, San Francisco.

And so my father and I and a bunch of other people, there were about a couple hundred people engaged in that, made sure that these people had hotels. We transported them in trucks or buses, whatever we could get, and made sure there was a community kitchen available for them to eat. Because many of them did not have a lot of money, and certainly had no means of making money at that time, and also tried to get jobs for those that who could get jobs.

In '48, things were getting a little better in the United States. When we arrived here in 1946, you couldn't get an apartment, all the homecoming of returning American GIs. There was not enough housing. Jobs were tough. It was the end of the war. So that was not an easy time either. So these people also had trouble. So we did that. It's not a big deal.

Frank, it sounds pretty big deal to me, actually, that you were doing that. I'd like to now turn to our audience, if we could, and take a little bit of time to ask if you have any questions of Frank. If you don't, I always have an endless list of them. But I certainly welcome you to pose a question or two. And we'll start, ma'am, right there.

Did you go back to Germany in 1995, when they had the 50-year I guess a celebration of the ending of the the war? Did you go back to Europe [CROSS TALK]?

The question is, did you go back to Germany in 1995? But I'll just add to that. Have you been back to Germany?

I didn't go for that occasion. I have been back to Germany, yes, three times. Well, my first time back was with the United States Army. And then--

What was that like to go back as a US soldier to Germany?

That was weird.

It was great.

It was strange too. I mean you speak the language. Your culture was there. But you were no longer one of them. And it's a very strange feeling. At first, you begin to speak German with the people. But after a while, you realize they think you're a German or something, and you quit, and you speak English. It's a very strange feeling. But it wasn't back then, I was back in 19-- that was in the '50s back in Germany. And then the next time was in 1992, I believe it was then.

Frank, we're going to go this young lady here, and then the gentleman behind her. So--

I was just wondering if you ever found out what happened to your friends or your family's friends that may have stayed in German, if you ever were able to contact them again, or if you ever looked for them.

The question is, Frank, did you ever find out what happened to other members of your extended family and friends in Germany? Have you been able to find out what happened to them? And did you contact them?

Yes, if they were members of the immediate family, they perished. My grandmother and my uncle, and that we found that out right after the war. They're also listed in the German Memorial book, which is on the library upstairs. It tells you where they perished. They perished in Lodz, which the second largest Polish city. They were taken there. The others, there were-- I never ran into another friend that I had known.

I went to school there for two years. The school has people who are older than I who have had reunions and I met two or three of those. The school itself is gone. There's a plaque now where the school was. But I have not really run into anyone from there, no.

OK. Sir?

Do you have any memories of how you were treated by ordinary Germans before you left Germany?

The question is, do you have any memory of how you were treated by ordinary Germans before you left Germany as a child?

That would depend. I remember getting on a streetcar once to go to my school in the Grunewald part of Berlin. And as we approached it, it was a Jewish school. We were not longer allowed to go to any other school. He says, oh, these Jew kids are getting off here. A large portion of the population was of that mind. However, there were people that lived, say, next to us, who when we left, they were very surprised that we were leaving. And why? Well, it seemed obvious to us, of course, not necessarily to them.

There was a mixture. You found people, most people who were afraid. But on the other hand, there were lots of people who certainly sided with the Nazi point of view. You could sense that. And those that didn't, didn't dare open their mouth.

Yes, sir?

What was your reception like in San Francisco when you came over from Manila? Were you welcomed by the US citizens, or how was that?

The question is, what was the reception like that got when you got to San Francisco? Were you welcomed by the American citizens there?

Well, the little freighter pulled into San Francisco Bay under the Golden Gate Bridge, just about midnight. And we were standing there, of course, watching this happen. I mean I was up in the flying bridge of the ship, watching for the first light. And the captain was up there as well. And he saw it first, because he had binoculars. But he says, there is the United States, son. One of these days, you may have to fight for that country. So yes, all right. No problem there.

And we took the pilot aboard, in those days, from a little sailing ship off the Farallon Islands, and we got under a bridge. And as we got under the bridge, we dropped pennies for luck. And we did have some pennies. And then my mother saw

in the distance this was all lighted up beautiful little area. She says, gee, that must be a resort hotel over there. So the crew members standing there says. No, ma'am, that's Alcatraz.

[LAUGHTER]

So sorry, about that. So we didn't land. There was no reception committee on the pier. We landed off at Hunter's Point, which is a Naval pier. And we just got off, and got into a taxi and drove to a hotel. There was no boat reception whatsoever, no.

How about after that?

Well, after that, we met other people who had arrived from the Philippines. And of course, a lot of people from-- some Shanghai people, and we joined a Jewish community synagogue, and my parents did anyway. And so that's how we met lots of people there from the old country, from the new country. So it was a friendly-- San Francisco was a very friendly place, certainly it was in those days.

OK. Yes, sir?

Have you ever been back to the Philippines.

The question is, have you ever been back to the Philippines?

I wish I had. I have not. It's a long way. And I haven't had the time, in most cases not the money. So I've never been back. I've been tempted to do that.

Your book might give you that opportunity potentially.

Well, maybe so. I don't know.

Yeah. I hope it does. Tell us in the remaining time we have, a little bit. Tell us about-- you told me a little anecdote about a gift that was given to you recently, an electric train set by friends.

Oh, yes. Well, it was actually quite a number of years ago. But when I left Germany, my father took me to this department store, one of the biggest ones in Berlin. It's was called KaDeWe. If you've been to Berlin, you may have been there. And they have a whole floor for toys. And he bought me an electric train. And it was one of these three rail type things, like a Marklin-- was a different brand. And the train worked, of course, in Germany. Because it was 220 volts. When we got to the Philippines, it was 110 volts, and I never could use the train.

But we stored it. And it blew up with the house. It was gone, of course. So after many years in this country here in Washington, we had these friends. And one day they showed up and they brought this box. And he says, oh, I've in the meantime built a model train in my basement, a different kind of train. They said, oh, you like trains. We have this train from our son. He's now older and he doesn't want to use this train. We'd given it to other people and their kids used it, and they gave it back to us. We don't know what to do with it. So maybe you can-- I don't know.

I opened the box and, by golly, was that the identical train that my father had bought me in 1939, including the little booklet that came with it, you know, that showed all the different parts that you can buy with the train. Yeah, so I have that now.

That's great.

Came back to roost.

Anybody, any other questions? Yes, sir.



Yeah, when you decided, your family decided to leave Germany, how difficult was it to get permission from Germany to leave the country?

The question asked is what difficulties did you have to get permission to be able to leave Germany?

At that time, the Germans were quite happy to see you go. There were certain restrictions that you could not take-- a restricted the amount of money you could take at that time, restricted to what you could take in terms of personal goods, restricted to what specific things you could take. The Gestapo would come to your house, look at the stuff that you plan to take with you, and approve what that was.

The other restrictions were, of course, the restrictions, the main restrictions came from the countries that you entered. If you were to enter the United States, you had a long list of things you had to show a clean police record, a clear financial record, like 10 or 12 things, part of a US immigration law, which applied to the Philippines as well. So those things had to be cleared. Police record, debt record, financial record, tax record. Then you had your passport.

And then to leave, you had to have the visa to go somewhere. If you had a visa stamped in your passport, and we had one stamped in our passport, where actually the words the United States were crossed out in the word Philippine Islands was inserted by the American consulate in Berlin. That then allowed you to leave. And that allows you to cross the border. You had to get a transit visa in our case to go through Italy, because that's where we had to go through and board the ship.

OK. One last quick question, sir. Yes, go ahead.

[INAUDIBLE] was it financial or whether there are some other reasons that when you left Germany that you didn't go to the United States directly, that you chose the Philippines?

The question is what were the reasons why you went to the Philippines rather than going to the United States.

Well it wasn't a matter of choice. We were very lucky to get to the Philippines. And of course, the Philippines deserves a lot of credit for our being able to go in there. The quota numbers in the United States are extremely restrictive. They're based on population in being, and other rules, and the wait for everything is quota numbers. If you wanted to entered the United States, you have to have a quota number. You might have to wait six years to get a quota number.

By that time, of course, it would be late.

Last question before we wrap up from me, and that is there a Jewish community in the Philippines today, Frank?

Yes, there is. It's about 250 people strong, made up mostly again of American Jews who are there for commercial reasons. And again, the small Sephardic community, Jewish community that has remained there. The synagogue was destroyed. They rebuilt it. And they rebuilt a third one actually, second one was sold. And it is now an Orthodox synagogue, which at the time when I was there it was not. It was a conservative synagogue, if you will. But where both the Orthodox and the more liberals or the conservative Jews all worshiped together. It was just one community.

So yes, there is a small community. There's a president, in fact, I email him occasionally.

You're going to have to go visit him. Frank, I want to thank you. And I'm going to turn back to Frank in just a moment. But I to thank all of you for being here for First Person. We obviously can only get just a glimpse of a remarkable experience, just a sense of what Frank and his family went through. In 2000, the museum held a special exhibit here called "Flight and Rescue," that was devoted to those Jews who were able to leave Europe, and end up in various parts of Southeast Asia.

Before I turn back to Frank to close, I want to remind you that we will have another First Person program every Wednesday until the end of August, till August 27th. I invite you to come back next week or any other Wednesday until the end of August. But next week, our first person will be Mr. Michel Margosis who happens to be sitting up here in the

front row. Mr. Margosis, who's from Brussels, Belgium, fled with his family to France, then Spain, then Portugal before reaching the United States in 1943. So hope you can come back and join Michel Margosis next week.

Our tradition here at First Person is that our first person gets the last word. So with that, I'd like to turn it back to Frank to close us out.

I don't know if many of you know, the Philippines now has a population of 73 million people. In a few decades, they will outnumber the combined populations of Germany and France. Just as a matter of because those two countries are declining in population. Perhaps, from my own perspective, that's a good thing. So actually, the view, of the United States policies I think should focus to the Pacific perhaps a little bit more. The Philippines are a very friendly country. They are helping the United States and others to fight terrorism, of which they have their own Islamic version.

And as you can see in the course of time, when we look at the Jewish people, the Jewish nation is really what we are, our first experience in the Holocaust was that the year 10,093, I believe, the Crusades. The next one was the Spanish Inquisition some 400 years later. And again 400 years later, was what we now call the Holocaust here in Europe. We can project that, but we won't do that. But we have to remember one thing. The Jewish nation has been around for almost six millennia. And while other Nations and other peoples have come and gone, I think we'll be around for another six millennia to see what happens. And I'd certainly like thank you for listening to me.

Thank you. Thank you, Frank.

[APPLAUSE]