

Good afternoon, and welcome to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. My name is Bill Benson. And I am the host of the museum's public program, First Person. Thank you for joining us.

This is our 10th year of the First Person program. Our First Person today is Rabbi Jacob Wiener whom we shall meet shortly. This 2009 season of First Person is made possible through the generosity of the Louis and Doris Smith Foundation to whom we are grateful for, again, sponsoring First Person.

First Person is a series of weekly conversations with survivors of the Holocaust, who share with us their firsthand accounts of their experience during the Holocaust. Each First Person guest serves as a volunteer here at the museum. With few exceptions, we will have a first person program each Wednesday through August 26. We will also have First Person programs on Tuesdays beginning in April and lasting until July-- through July. The museum's website at www.ushmm.org-- that's www.ushmm.org-- provides a list of the upcoming guests on the First Person program.

This year, we are offering a new feature associated with First Person. Excerpts from our conversations with survivors will be available as podcasts on the museum's website. Several are already posted on the website. And Rabbi Wiener's will be available within the next few weeks. The First Person podcasts join two other museum podcast series-- Voices on Antisemitism and Voices on Genocide Prevention. The podcasts are also available through iTunes.

Rabbi Jacob Wiener will share his first person account of his experience during the Holocaust and as a survivor for about 40 minutes. We will follow that with an opportunity for you to ask a few questions of Jacob Wiener. Before you are introduced to him, I have several announcements and a couple of requests of you.

First, if possible, we ask that you stay seated throughout our one-hour program. That way we minimize any disruptions for Jacob as he speaks. Second, in the hope that we will have time for question and answers towards the end of the program and if you have a question, we ask that you make your question as brief as you can. I will repeat it so everyone in the room hears it, including Jacob, and then he'll respond to your question.

If you have a cell phone or a pager that has not yet been turned off, we would ask that you do that at this time. I'd also like to let those of you who may have passes to the permanent exhibition today know that they are good for the entire afternoon. So you can stay with us until 2:00 and then go to 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. Roma and Sinti, or Gypsies, people with mental and physical disabilities, 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.

More than 60 years after the Holocaust, hatred and antisemitism and genocide still threaten our world. The life stories of Holocaust survivors transcend the decades and remind us of the constant need to be vigilant citizens and to stop injustice, prejudice, and hatred wherever and whenever they occur. What you are about to hear from Jacob Wiener is one individual's account of the Holocaust. We have prepared a brief slide presentation to help with Jacob's introduction.

We begin with this photograph of Benno and Gerd Zwienicki, who are standing on the right next to the bicycle as they pose in front of their father's bicycle shop with a group of non-Jewish children from the neighborhood. And the circle is on Jacob, or Gerd, his given name. On this map of Europe, the arrow points to Germany. And on this map of Germany, the arrow points to Bremen, where Jacob was born in 1917, the eldest of four children.

As a child, Jacob experienced the hardships of the Depression and witnessed the violent street fights between the Nazis and their political opponents, the communists and the socialists. This photograph shows a roundup of political opponents of the Nazi regime in 1933.

After graduation from high school, Jacob began rabbinical studies in Frankfurt am Main and later at the Jewish Teachers' Seminary in Wurzburg. This photograph is a view of the Wurzburg Jewish Teachers' Seminary. And this next

photo is of the graduating class of the Wurzburg Jewish Teachers' Seminary shortly before it closed down on Kristallnacht in November 1938. And the circle shows you Jacob. In this photograph, we see Jacobs studying outside the Wurzburg Jewish Teacher's Seminary shortly before it closed.

The dots on this map of Germany represent cities where many synagogues were destroyed on Kristallnacht, or the Night of Broken Glass. And this photograph shows Germans passing the broken window of a Jewish-owned business that was destroyed during Kristallnacht on November 9 and 10, 1938.

Here, we see a photograph of Jacob's mother, Selma, who was murdered on Kristallnacht. And on the right is her death certificate, issued by the Nazi authorities. And you'll note that the lower left-hand side, you'll see the Nazi insignia.

The arrow on this map points to Canada. On May 31, 1939, the Zwienicki family settled in Canada, where their father had a relative. Jacob later entered the United States on a student visa and began attending the Baltimore Rabbinical College. In 1948, Jacob married Trudel Farnrog, who was also a Holocaust survivor. Trudel left Germany and went to England as a member of a Kindertransport.

Upon arriving in Baltimore, Jacob attended Rabbinical College and was ordained in 1944. He subsequently established a very accomplished career in human services, particularly in the emerging field of child welfare, where he contributed to the creation of the nation's child welfare laws. He also founded a home for children and earned his PhD from New York University.

Today, Jacob lives here in the Washington area. He is a founding volunteer here at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. You will find him here on Tuesdays. He is presently working on his memoirs.

Jacob lost his lovely wife, Trudel, seven years ago after nearly 54 years of marriage. Trudel too, as I noted before, was a Holocaust survivor. Jacob and Trudel had three children, who now among them have produced 17 grandchildren and at last count 20 great-grandchildren and, as Jacob said, still counting. And I'm very pleased to let that it just happens that today is Jacob Wiener's birthday. And with that I'd like to ask you to join me in welcoming our First Person, Jacob wiener, and wishing him a very happy birthday.

[APPLAUSE]

[APPLAUSE]

Jacob was telling me there was too much to do about his birthday here. [LAUGHTER] Thank you all for joining us. And most especially, Jacob, thank you for your willingness to be our First Person today.

Thank you.

Jacob let's start-- and you were old enough to be aware of Hitler's rise to power and to feel its early effects upon your community, your family and yourself. Please tell us about those years in the 1930s that led up to the events of Kristallnacht. What were those early years like for you? And particularly the years of the Nazis coming to power as you were entering young adulthood.

The Nazis came to power in 1933 with Hitler. And from that day on, it went worse and worse and worse for the Jews, for us. We couldn't go any more to Jewish-- to schools. We had to make schools. I made a school for Jewish schools, for Jewish children because I understand and I know-- I'm an educator too-- that it's important to get education wherever you want to go.

So it started then. And more and more laws were enacted against the Jews. And they were made to leave. And many tried to escape and to go, but it wasn't always easy.

Well, tell us about your life at home. Tell us about your parents.

Yeah.

Tell us a little bit about your parents, Jacob.

My parents?

Yes.

We had a bicycle and repair shop, bicycle business, selling bicycles and repair shop. And we were living in-- Bremen has two parts. Through Bremen, there's a river, the Weser. And we lived in a newer part, which was the south part, south of the river.

And business also became bad because-- my father had a bicycle business, as I said. And in order to make it worse for him, they placed a competitor right at the corner, two or three houses away from us. However, he wasn't very much an expert in doing business and repair shop. He came over to my father all the time. And he helped him.

So just to make sure we understand, the Nazis in order to essentially try to put your father out of business established a competitor right next door. But as I remember you telling me, he didn't know anything about bicycles. So he came to your dad to learn how to fix bicycles.

Yes.

And he was supposed to put him out of business.

Yeah.

Your mother was also an extraordinary woman, an educated woman. Tell us about your mom.

My mother had a very good handwriting. And at that time, there were no typewriters yet. People came to her, and she had a beautiful handwriting. I have some copies of it. And she also helped other people. And we were very friendly with other people, Jews and non-Jews, everyone.

And if your mother-- that's something that doesn't happen today-- because of her handwriting people came to her to write letters for them like--

Yeah.

--to their girlfriend and beautiful handwriting. She also was a teacher of a method that was very similar to Montessori, right?

Yeah.

The Froebel method.

Montessori and Froebel was one of the people there, the educators of the 19th century.

Jacob, here you are living in Germany. But in the eyes of the German government, you were considered stateless. What did that mean?

I was considered stateless because in Germany, even though I was born, there you are not when you're born there you become a German like here in America you are an American. No, you are what your father was. My father came from Russia. And he had lost the Russian citizenship during the revolution in Russia. And so we were stateless. Stateless means without a state. And I had a stateless passport. Passport pour "tranger, it's called, passport for strangers.

You used the phrase with me one time, you referred to burnt pancakes as a label for some people. Tell us what a burnt pancake was.

The [GERMAN], that means the turnover from the democracy in Germany toward the Nazis came very quick in 1933. And many people were afraid they would not be able to have a job anymore. So they became outerly, outwards, they became Nazis. But innerly, they remained communist. And we called them burnt pancakes.

Burnt means it's red from the inside, communist, but Brown from the outside. They had a brown Nazi kind of uniform.

So they were known as burnt pancakes.

They were pancakes.

[LAUGHS]

Jacob, the Nazis made a law that required all Jews to take, quote, "Israelite" names. But you mentioned that Joseph was not permitted to be used as an Israelite name. That was excluded. Why was Joseph excluded?

Everyone had to have the name Israel, a man, and Sarah, a woman. And then they had a list in the paper, which said these names we consider Jews and these not. Joseph was not considered a Jewish name because there was the minister, the Secretary of Propaganda, Joseph Goebbels. And his name was Joseph. So therefore, he was not considered a Jewish name.

So his name, Goebbels name, was off limits.

Off limits.

Jacob, you actually, yourself, saw all of those terrible people. You saw Hitler. You saw Goebbels. You saw Goering. What do you recall about seeing those individuals?

Yeah, I saw them. I saw Hitler. I saw Goebbels. I saw even the president from before Hindenburg. And Hindenburg once took me to his arm when he saw me and asked me, what's your name? I gave him. He said, and what do you want to be when you grow up? So I had a brainstorm. And I said to him I want to be a mensch, a mensch means a human being, you see, not like they. We consider everything equal.

Jacob, your family, as I recall, had an affidavit to go to Brooklyn as early as the early 1920s, 1923--

To America.

--to America. Why didn't you go?

My mother didn't want to go because she had all her relatives in Germany. And at that time there was a democracy. And it wasn't too bad. They had a Constitution, according to which everyone is considered equal.

On November 9 and 10, 1938, the night of Kristallnacht, or the Night of Broken Glass, you were away attending the Jewish Teachers' Seminary in Wurzburg, in Bavaria. Your mother was murdered that night.

Yeah.

Before we talk about the murder of your mother, tell us what happened to you and your classmates on the night of Kristallnacht while you were away. And then tell us about your mother's murder.

To me personally?

Mm-hmm.

I was away from Bremen about 400 kilometers In Wurzburg in Bavaria. And at that night, they broke in the middle of the night. And they arrested all the boys, maybe 50 boys. It was a dormitory-- in the middle of the night.

Arrested all of you?

Yeah. And then they said, wait downstairs. They came at 2:30 at night. And wait here. We waited there.

And then afterwards, they came and said, form lines outside, 5 abreast. Now Wurzburg is a small city. It has cobblestones. And we were led through the streets.

In the meantime, from the morning till that time, they assembled all-- as many as they could-- people of the city. And they were staying at the side. And they walked us through the street. And while they were walking us through the streets, these people, you see, called us names. They spit at us and so forth.

We went through the streets. And we went past the burning synagogues because during that night they burned about 400 synagogues, I think, or so in Germany. And we were led into the prison. When we came into the prison, and the Nazis and Germans were very special, they were very much interested in meticulous. They were meticulous. The first thing they asked us is, empty all your pockets. And they took an inventory of that.

Of everything in your pockets?

Everything, even what was in a penny. And then they led us into the cells. We were in the cells for about seven days. Every day the people who were arrested there, many of them disappeared. They were sent to concentration camps. I was still there.

When the seventh day came, after seven days, this was on the 9th of November, seven days later, the 16th, I think it was Friday, in the evening they said, you stay out. Seven boys were standing out. And then they said to us suddenly, you are free, go home to your hometown and report to the local Gestapo. Gestapo means secret police. But I had no money and so forth. But making a long story short, I came home.

How did you get 400 kilometers with no money?

That was a miracle. I had many miracles.

Somehow you got--

I met a secretary from the school. She gave me 20 marks. It was enough to take a train and go home. I came home. It was Thursday evening, and Friday morning I came home.

I called up my home. No answer. Then I took a streetcar. I went to my home. And I saw the windows of our business, as I said before, the bicycle business was broken and barricaded.

And I went to the other side. We had an entrance to the business and an entrance to the private quarters. There was a note. Get the key from the police department. Before I went to the police department, the non-Jewish neighbor of opposite, who had a furniture business, called me in. He was afraid to come to the street. It was forbidden between Jews and non-Jews to talk to each other. But he called me in and told me the story.

In that night, they had come in, broken the door, and told my brother to stand in the door and watch that no one should see it. They were afraid of dark. Then they went up.

And in the meantime, my father had fled over the roofs. And he went to-- he said to the neighbor, I'm going to Sweden. During the war, there were only three countries which were neutral. They start always with an S-- Sweden, Switzerland,

and Spain.

So what happened is he said, I'm going to Sweden. But they came into the house, broke in. And when they saw my mother, they asked her, where's your husband? She didn't want to-- I don't know-- or she didn't know what happened. And therefore, they killed her.

Afterwards I saw in a document, why did you kill her? That was after the war when they had the tribunal. She said she didn't know. Then they killed her. The document says, "Because she didn't answer the question." Not answering the question of a Nazi is punishable by death.

So she didn't say-- she didn't answer the question, where was your father--

She may not have known.

Right.

Or he may not have told her.

But they shot her right on the spot.

But I think he didn't tell her. He just went out.

What happened to your brother? He was at home too, wasn't he?

My brother, they made him stay at the door that no one else should see what they are doing. See no one else should come in. And then suddenly he came to Hamburg.

How he came to Hamburg, if he went there-- some people say he went barefoot to Hamburg. But I don't know that. He came there. First, she said to him, get a doctor. He went there and they followed him. And that's probably why he continued to run to Hamburg. That's a very far distance, you see, maybe 120 kilometers.

When did you find out where your father had gone?

I was with, like all the others in Wurzburg, where I was at that time, were arrested and sent to concentration-- not concentration-- to a prison, in a prison. The prison was emptied every day a little more. And so forth then came the seventh day. And they said, before the seventh day, they said, we are going to empty the chamber for more.

Seven people were called out. I was one of them. And while the others went back into the cells and they would be sent to concentration camps or so, I had the luck that they didn't send me to a concentration camp. They said to us seven, you are free. Go home to your Gestapo and report there at once.

And your father, he was able to avoid being sent to a concentration camp--

He went over the roofs, you see, and said to the non-Jewish neighbor, I'm going to Sweden. Sweden was neutral. But he never went there.

Jacob, you told me the first time we met that there had been very little attention given to the fact that Jews were actually killed on the night of Kristallnacht, very little attention. And you said that in addition to your mother, there were at least five Jews murdered that night in Bremen.

Yeah.

Were Jews murdered that night in many cities in Germany?

Probably. But I have a book, which was written about the five Jews, which means, [GERMAN], They Were Living Among Us. And that's what it was.

I think ultimately you said you knew-- you read about at least 90 Jews that were killed in Kristallnacht and probably many more.

Maybe in all Germany. But in our city, in Bremen, five.

Five in Bremen, including your mom. After your release from prison and your return to Bremen, you were put into, quote, "protective custody." I think that's what the Nazis called it, protective custody. While you were in that state of protective custody, you became very active in the Jewish community. What was that like for you? What were you doing? And what did it mean to the rest of your family?

As I said before, after seven days, I was released. And I went to Bremen. And in Bremen, there, a few Jews had returned. And they formed a small community. And the Nazis wanted from this community that one of them should be appointed to be a liaison, contact man, between them and the Jewish community. They want to know what the Jews do.

And you became the liaison from the Jewish community to the Gestapo?

I was the liaison. I was about 15 years old. Yes.

And here you are serving as the liaison with the Gestapo. What did you do as the liaison to the Gestapo?

They had one agenda. They want to know what the Jews are doing in Germany. And I had another agenda. I wanted to get Jews out of concentration camps. And I wanted to make a Jewish school. Because I said to them, you see, if you want the Jews to go out, to leave Germany, they have to know something. Give them education. That's very important.

And when they asked me-- when I get to them and they asked him, tell me, what's happening to the Jews, I said to them, you know you have your spies. So I'm not telling you. So that's what it is. I was always very upfront.

You were able to negotiate with them. And weren't you able to actually get them to consent to you opening up a school?

Yes, I negotiated on two points. One was to make a Jewish community there. And secondly, to make a school. I said, if you want them out, they have to have some education, what they can do. Because it is like this, with any kind of enemy, especially with the Nazis, never let yourself be put down. But they liked if you are on their level and you tell them something, you see, which they want to hear. They don't want to see people crying and weeping and so forth. They don't want to see this.

You would actually have to go to Gestapo headquarters. Tell us what that was like for you. And particularly, tell us about-- you told me about the big poster that greeted you when you walked into the Nazi-- the Gestapo headquarters.

Yes. I had to go to the Gestapo twice a week, I think. And it was in Bremen in a big house. The house had no number.

No number on the house?

No. And there was a bell. You push the bell. The bell opens the door automatically. And you see a big picture. You see a big picture of a man like this. What does that mean?

With his hands to his lips.

Schweigen in German. Silence in English. So silencio.

So as you walk in, there's a big poster with a man who just simply says, silence.

Yeah, silence.

Were you scared?

No.

No.

So then they told me over the radio what it was and said, come up to the second floor. And I went. And there was a Nazi sitting with his feet on his desk. And he said to me, what's new with the Jews? So I told him, you know. See, they like to hear-- to being challenged. They liked that.

During this time while you were so active with the community, how was your father able to make ends meet for himself and the children?

They left from Bremen. And they went to Hamburg where my mother's relatives were living. And I found them there after I was released. Seven days later, I found them there.

Jacob, at the end of May in 1939, you and your family were able to leave Germany. And you went to Canada. Tell us how it was possible for you under those circumstances and for your father with four children to get you out of Germany so that you could go to Canada? And why Canada?

It was always difficult for us to find people outside. We wrote-- my mother wrote to many relatives and acquaintances in the whole world to get out. But it wasn't so easy because there was a quota. Even in America was a quota of so many people coming in and this and other things.

But he was lucky also. He found a man in Hamburg who was connected with the Cunard White Star Line, which is a British shipping line. And he arranged for us to get some affidavit in Canada because my mother had written before to Canada. We had a relative in Montreal. But he was not living in Montreal. He was living in Saskatchewan, which is far out.

In Saskatchewan?

Yeah.

Which is way on the western side of Canada.

Yeah, it's in the middle of the country about. So finally, we got that. And they called it a landing card. Can land in there. But you had to get a ship to get there. Airplanes didn't go yet. They, did but not there.

So what happened is so he found this man from the Cunard White Star Line. And we got an affidavit and the shipping cards. But we had to sell our house.

Now, we couldn't sell our house anymore as us, as we, the owner. They put about every house, every Jewish possession, they put some kind of trustee, or what they called it. And they had to make the arrangements. So she made the arrangements, this woman. And we got 1,200 marks.

1,200 marks for you house?

Which was just enough to get for the shipping cards, you see. So we had to sell the house, of course.

So that 1,200 marks paid for your--

It paid for the tickets, for the shipping cards, billets.

Before your mother was killed, she had, as you said, written to a relative in Canada. And you'd written to people all over the world, looking for a place where you might go. How many letters did you yourself write?

Huh?

Didn't you tell me you wrote personally over 200 letters looking for a place to go?

Yeah, we sent a lot of them. She was a good writer and could write very well. They didn't have many typewriters. But she had good handwriting too. So she wrote to many people. And they came back and they said, it's not so bad. It'll get better. Just overcome it. Wait. Time will-- cures. You think time cures.

But as it turned out, things obviously didn't get better. And you were able to get passage and go to Canada. What was it like-- it was you, your father and your three siblings. What was it like for you to leave Germany? To get on a ship, to sail to Canada, what was that like for you?

On the one hand, you see, it wasn't too bad in Germany before, in the beginning, in the '20s and '30s until the Nazis came. Then it went all against us. But people knew in advance they had to leave. In fact, many people wanted to stay in Germany because they felt so good there. However, after Kristallnacht, they knew--

Right.

--it would not change because that was the night when they invaded all the Jewish homes. I don't know how many, 300,000 or maybe more. And they knew this is the beginning of the end, the end of the beginning, the beginning of the end.

When you sailed on the ship, do you remember if you had the sense that you may never see many of your relatives and many of your friends and neighbors from the Jewish community ever again?

And I had never been outside of Germany, only to England maybe. But my wife, my mother, you see, they had some relatives there. So we stayed there a little bit. And then we took the ferry from Germany to England. And then from England, we took a big ship from Southampton to Montreal, Canadian line.

So what happened when you got to Canada?

In where?

When you got to Canada, what happened? Where did you land? And happened?

We came to Canada. When we came to Canada, Montreal, they told us, the government, you are refugees. And we have to send you immediately to your destination. What was our destination? Our destination was Saskatchewan, Yorkton, Saskatchewan, which is in the middle of the country because he had given the affidavit. We had to go there.

So you couldn't stay in Montreal for a while?

No. But we stayed in Montreal because a miracle happened, like many miracles.

A miracle happened.

So in Montreal, the government said, we have to send all the refugees immediately to the destination. Your train goes at 12 o'clock. Now, it's 10 o'clock. To stay here, we put you on a train.

In the meantime, between 10:00 and 12:00, two nuns came into the place, into the waiting hall for the trains. So my father said, we had written to the whole world. And one letter had come from Canada. And it was a cousin of my father,

a man, a family, whom he knew from his youth. When he was young, he played with him and so forth. He said, I think he is still living here. Maybe if he knows that we have come here, he will take us into his house.

And now came the nuns. So he went over to the nuns. And they spoke only in French and English. But he spoke Russian. He came from Russia. But it was a miracle. One of the nuns knew Russian too.

One of the nuns knew Russian too?

Yes. So he spoke to her in Russian. And he said to her, I know I received a letter not found, but that's impossible. He must be here yet.

So the people who came and who opened the desk and who had Travelers Aid-- that's the organization that helps stranded people and so forth. Good organization. He went over to them. He found this woman who spoke Russian. He said to her, can you find him?

Now, they had no computers at that time. But they had address books. So they looked up. What's his name? Kaplan. There are many Kaplan. She called up. [INAUDIBLE]. And make a long story short, when he found someone on the phone. He said, yeah, your name is Kaplan. And he comes from Russia? Yes. I'm the son.

Call up. Spoke to the son. He spoke to them. And when he spoke to the parents, you see, they said to him, you don't go any further. You stay in Montreal. So we stayed in Montreal [? by us. ?] It's a miracle.

So you stayed in Montreal?

So we stayed Montreal.

After a while, though, you decided to come to the United States to study.

Yeah.

It was difficult for you to get to the United States. Why was that?

They just had changed the law about students coming to the United States. They didn't need an affidavit before. They could travel there. But then they changed it.

So one day, while I was in Montreal with these people-- no-- in Montreal, yes-- with these people, they showed me a paper. It's not in existence anymore, The Americana. And there was a picture of some students who were in Wurzburg with me. So I said, they are now in Baltimore, in Baltimore and the Jewish Teachers' Seminary. So we write to them. And you may be able to get an affidavit and go there.

So I wrote to them, you see. And they accepted me. However, that was good for me, but not so good in general because you needed permission from-- my passport was already-- I had no passport. I had this. But make a long story short, I finally got there. I got to Baltimore.

And what happened when you got to Baltimore? Which of course is just up the road.

I came to Baltimore, to the Teachers' Seminary. It's still there, the Teachers' Seminary in Baltimore. I came there because I saw this picture, which they had shown me. And I knew some people there.

Jacob, of course, you began your studies, resumed your studies at the Rabbinical School, began in Baltimore. But you wanted to be an air raid warden because now we're getting prepared for entry into the war here. But you were denied-- by our government, you were denied being an air raid warden. Why was that?

When I came here, I thought it would be a good thing to work as an air raid warden. But after one or two weeks, he said

to me, you can't be anymore. You're an enemy alien. Enemy because I came from Germany. And Germany was, of course, an enemy. But I was never a German--

The irony of that is extraordinary. You were an enemy alien because you came from Germany.

I came from Germany.

Even though you were fleeing the German government, the Nazis.

Yeah.

OK. So after the war-- well, let's talk a little bit more about that. Meanwhile your family, your father and your other siblings have stayed in Canada. Were you able to see them at all during that time?

Yeah. I you could see them, you see, when I go up-- when I traveled to Montreal. But you needed travel permission from the attorney general.

And, Jacob, during that time, were you able to have communication with any of your family members still in Germany?

Most of them were out. We wrote them during the war. And some answer. That was all.

OK. Jacob, I'm going to ask just a few more questions. And then we're going to turn it to the audience and ask if they have some questions. As I said in the opening comments, you had an extraordinarily successful career in human services and particularly in child welfare. In light of what you experienced in your earlier years during the rise of the Nazis in Germany and then what you went through with Kristallnacht and representing the Jewish community and helping to build a school, do you think that experience influenced your decision as to what you're going to do for your career for here?

What did you say?

Your work in child welfare, do you think that was motivated by what you experienced in Germany and in your life?

Probably. We set up in New York and in other cities in the United States child welfare laws. You see, I helped with child welfare laws in Albany. And also, I think it's important to have that, you see. We set up child laws on child abuse and child neglect, we sent up in the '60s, '70s.

I had the privilege of meeting Jacob's wife, Trudel, who passed away seven years ago. And she too was a Holocaust survivor. Tell us a little bit about Trudel, if you don't mind.

She was born in southern Germany, in $\frac{1}{4}$ th Nuremberg. And we met in the seminary, where she also went. And she was a biologist by profession. And I knew her parents and her family very well.

When she left on the Kindertransport, on the--

She left on the Kindertransport from Germany to England--

Which was all kids that were able to get out. But the parents were not able to. Did her parents survive the war?

Yes, they came also to England, I think. And she was a biologist, as I said, and was very intelligent and wrote also like I did.

Several years ago you heard from somebody from Germany who said they played with you as a child, if I remember right. And you got into this conversation with him. He called you. And he was from your town. Tell us about that conversation if you remember much about it. It's been a while since you told me about it.

This was a neighbor of ours in Bremen. And when I was in Germany. I was in Germany in 2005, I think, in 1997. So he wrote me a letter. So I wrote him back. And I asked him, what did you do during the war? So he told me. He wrote me, I was a prison guard in Bergen-Belsen.

Now, Bergen-Belsen was a concentration camp not far from Bremen. And it was a very bad camp, a death camp even, I think. Anyhow, but I never killed anyone, and I never touched anyone.

That's what he said, I never touched anyone.

Yes. So I said I said, [INAUDIBLE].

But he just admitted it. He said I was a guard at Bergen-Belsen.

He said-- even when I was in Germany recently, 2005, I met some Germans who asked about my mother. They said they didn't hear anything that day, the Kristallnacht was not published as Kristallnacht in Germany. It wasn't published. So people didn't know about it, Kristallnacht. They told me there.

And so they were really-- he said, my brother came at that night-- at that morning of the 9th of-- 9th through the 10th of November, 10th of November 1938, he came to school, and he was crying. No one asked him why he cried. But that was the night when they killed her. He saw it, probably. They did not announce it. They did not publish the Kristallnacht in Germany.

And you've gone back and visited Germany with one of the purposes to find out what Germans knew, the younger Germans knew about the Holocaust, right?

Yeah.

Jacob, why don't we turn to our audience and see if they have some questions for you. And if you have a question, try to make it brief. And I'll repeat it so everybody can hear it. Do we have any questions anybody would like to ask Jacob? Don't be bashful. There's a question in the very back row. And you may have to kind of shout it out a little bit.

What have you told your children and grandchildren about the Holocaust?

The question is, what have you told your children and grandchildren about the Holocaust? Thank you for that question. What have you told your children and grandchildren about the Holocaust? Do you talk about it?

Yeah. Of course, I told them about it. They asked, what happened to your mother? What happened to you? Children want to know. It is usually, you see, the children don't want to know. Grandchildren want to know because they feel too close to the parents, you see. It's a psychological what I found out and study. So then I told them the story when they were a little bit older. When they're very young, they don't understand yet and it's not good to tell them.

Thank you. Do we have any other questions? Well, if folks are thinking-- oh, we got one right-- young man right there in the blue, I think.

Where did you meet Hitler?

The question is, where did you meet-- or where did you see Hitler? Where did that happen? When you saw Hitler, where was that?

It was in Hamburg.

It was in Hamburg.

Hamburg is not very far from Bremen, 120 kilometers. And at that time, when Hitler-- it was in a few years of Hitler, he was still afraid of the reaction by the populace. So he went through the Jewish section. And he went to the Jewish section in Hamburg, which they called the Grindel section. And I saw him standing in the car. I wasn't very far from him.

But I didn't want to be seen. And I didn't want to make the heil Hitler sign. So I was hiding behind a tree. And that's what I'm saying-- was standing like this. So Hitler had two kinds of greetings. This was his German greeting. This was the Hitler greeting. Hitler greeting.

This was the German greeting--

Yeah. He used the German greeting.

But you got behind the tree.

But he was a very good speaker, probably. And so I was standing behind the tree. I saw Hindenburg too. And Hindenburg, who was the president before, you see, I saw him when he came from a speech, which he just had made-- Hindenburg against Hitler. The first time when they had the vote, he won. Second time, then during that time, he died in 1934. And then Hitler took over. And he called himself not the vice president, the president, but the Führer. Führer means leader.

It's astonishing, Jacob, just to consider how much history that you were personally witness to. Going back to Hindenburg, have you have you been able to learn, Jacob, about your fellow students at the Wurzburg seminary if any of the others were able to survive and what became of them?

Some of them were able to survive, you see. They either emigrated or they went to another country temporarily, and from there, they went to Israel or to any other country. But I still have some contact with some of them. But everyone has his own history.

Mm-hmm. OK. We got a question right here. Yes, sir.

When did you about the full picture of happened in the Holocaust? And what did you think of doing because of that?

The question is, when did you learn, Jacob, about the full impact of what happened during the Holocaust? And once you learned it, what was its impact on you?

I learned about it a little bit in school.

In Baltimore?

Yeah. And I know, you see, that there was always hatred in the world. And when I went and talked about every other thing, I said, we cannot have peace-- that was my motto. I spoke to the soldiers. I spoke in Fort Meade. I spoke in other places. They asked me, do you think we can ever have peace? I say, only under one condition. If every person would respect each other. You see, if they would respect each other, then we might have come closer to peace. But if they hate-- and this always is hatred-- then we won't have peace. You have to accept the other one as he is as he is and then you might have peace.

OK. Gentlemen back here on the right, I believe.

What was worse about the Holocaust, the physical side or the emotional?

Do you mind repeating that just a little bit louder? I couldn't hear that.

What was worse about the Holocaust, the physical or the emotional?

Very good question. The question is, for you, what was worse about the Holocaust, the physical things that happened-- you were in prison-- or was it the emotional or psychological things that happened? What was worse for you?

I think the emotional because, you see, the physical thing is you see it, you see it, and you can witness it, you see? But the emotion means what you take into, what it means to you, you see. Now, it can affect you in different way. I don't want to feel like that. I hope it will get better and so forth. That's what you say.

Got a question right here.

You started out as studying as a rabbi. And then when you came to the United States, you got your PhD in human development and social relations. So was the teaching with what you learned about social relations, was that different from the studies you did as a rabbi?

The question is, you trained and became an ordained rabbi. And then went on to get a PhD in and work in the human services field and in education. Were there differences between the training? And how did that influence your career and what you did?

No, I got a degree from New York University in human development and social relations. So I studied this kind of subject, social relation. We have to be together-- we have to work together. We have to live together, you see. We have to know this, you see. Human development and social relations were my subject. And I wrote about that.

Folks, I think it's-- oh, we got one more question and then-- oh, you have a question too. OK, we'll do two more.

So during the Nazis' rise to power, do you know in which periods they burned the Bundestag?

The question is, when was the Bundestag burned during the Nazi rise to power?

Hmm?

The burning of the Bundestag?

The burning-- the burning of the-- yeah, they were burning the books-- the burning of the books in 1934.

1934.

I saw that because I went to a place nearby us where they threw all the books in. You see, this in the museum too here where the books were burned. And they only wanted things which they would approve, of which they would like. And they didn't like these books, even books of an American author. You know-- remember?

An American author, his books went into the fire too?

Yeah.

And you witnessed that.

Yeah, I saw them when they threw the books into the fire. But they know that books are written, you see. And there are books other places, you see. You can really even read books.

OK, I think we got one more question for you, Jacob, right here.

How did you find hope through the Holocaust?

Jacob, the question is, how did you find hope during the Holocaust?

How you'd find what?

Hope.

Hope.

How did you find and keep hope?

You see, fortunately, the majority of the people who live here nowadays, you see, are positive, and they are not negative. And that's good. But you have to hope. If you don't have hope, you can't live. You cannot live with hatred. You cannot live with hating everyone and so forth. You destroy yourself.

So you have to have hope. And I always had hope it will change. And I believe in that. And you have to have a belief in God and in certain things, you see. So therefore, you have hope it will change. The bad things can never remain very long. That's what I say.

You have to look forward to the positive. I'm always positive. When they ask me, why are you positive? You see, it doesn't pay to be negative because I say we survived many, many kind of bad things. And we survived. And people, they will always be survivors.

Jacob, I want to thank you very much for being our First Person. It's clear--

[APPLAUSE]

I think by the answers to the questions, including the last question, you've been a teacher all your life with very important things to share with everybody who's probably been in your presence. So thank you for that.

Before I turn back to Jacob for just a final word, I'd like to thank you all for being here and to remind you that we will have a First Person program almost every Wednesday until August 26. And then in April through July, we'll have First Person programs on Tuesdays as well.

So our next First Person program will be next Wednesday, March-- excuse me, April 1, I believe it is, when our first person will be Mrs. Katie Altenberg, who is from Vienna, Austria. After German troops invaded Austria, Katie and her family would be arrested and sent to a concentration camp. Katie and her brother would be separated from their parents and sent to a children's camp. Her father escaped from the concentration camp and was able to smuggle his two children out of the camp they were in and find refuge in a safe house in Budapest. Eventually, they would be sent to a ghetto, but would be liberated by the Russians in 1945.

So we hope that you will come back to another First Person program if you can this year. Or look ahead if you visit Washington, DC next year and come here on a Wednesday or a Tuesday. And please remember that can access First Person excerpts and other museum programs in audio form as podcasts on the museum's website and at iTunes.

It's our tradition at First Person that our First Person has the last word. And so with that, I'd like to turn back to Jacob to share with us his concluding thoughts for today.

Whenever I give a talk, I think about this. Remember, when I asked people, what should you remember, then I get many times negative answers, the Holocaust or this. I say, you should be more positive. Like I'm most positive.

There are many bad things happen in this world. What do people think of first? The bad things which happen. But you should think of the good things that happened.

Because despite all the bad things which happen to me and to other people and to everyone in the world, you should think positive that things will change and we lived. You see, many people were killed, but we survived. Many people

suffered tragedies and other things, and they survived because they kept up the faith. They kept up the hope. And that's what we have to do.

We have to keep up the hope and never give up hope. And stay in that. And not think about hatred and other things. We have to think about the positive. And that's what I say.

When I ask, what will you remember? They say, the Holocaust. I say, yes, you should remember that. But you should remember in addition that the Holocaust came and it went-- I don't know-- and we are still alive. So we are still alive. There will always be survivors. And let's hope that we all stay well.

And I wish you all the best and thank you for listening to me. And I hope you learned a few things. And be well. Thank you.

And happy birthday, Jacob.

[APPLAUSE]