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Good afternoon, and welcome to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. My name is Steve Luckert. I'm today's host of the museum's public program, First Person.

I want to thank you for joining us. And it's with great pleasure that today we start our 11th year of First Person with a presentation by Dr. Fritz Gluckstein, whom we shall meet shortly.

This 2010 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 experiences associated with the Holocaust. Each guest serves as a volunteer here at the museum.

With few exceptions, we will have a First Person guest each Wednesday through August 25. We will also have First Person programs on Tuesdays in April through July.

The museum's website www.ushmm.org provides a list of upcoming First Person events and guests. Excerpts from First Person programs are available as podcasts from the museum's website, as well as on iTunes. Several of these have already been posted on the website.

Today, Fritz will share his first person account of his experiences during the Holocaust and as a survivor for about 40 minutes. We will follow that with an opportunity for you to ask Fritz some questions.

But before I introduce you to Fritz, I have a few announcements and requests to make of you. First of all, please stay in your seats during the program so that we may minimize any disruption while Fritz speaks. I also want to let you know that those of you with passes to the permanent exhibition today, that those are good for the time printed on the ticket and any time after that. So if your passes are for 1:30 or so, they are still going to be valid after that.

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, people with mental and physical disabilities, and Poles, were also targeted for destruction or dissemination 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 Germany.

The life stories of Holocaust survivors transcend the decades. What you are about to hear from Fritz Gluckstein is one individual's account of the Holocaust. He survived the Holocaust, stayed in Berlin throughout the war, and as you will hear today, despite several arrests and other close calls and being conscripted into forced labor, Fritz remained in the German capital until he was liberated by the Soviet Red Army in 1945.

Now I want to show you a brief slide presentation that introduces you to Fritz. This is a photograph of Fritz, who was born in Berlin, Germany, on January 24, 1927. This is Fritz with his parents, Georg and Hedwig Gluckstein. His father was a judge in the German legal system and was Jewish, and his mother was Christian.

And here are some photographs of Fritz returning back to Berlin to look at some of the places where he lived, a school he attended, and places where he played. When he was younger, Fritz enjoyed the company of other children, and he enjoyed school gatherings. And you can see Fritz in the middle there.

This is a photograph showing German soldiers marching through Berlin's Brandenburg Gate. When the Nazis came to power in 1933, they initiated anti-Jewish legislation. And as a result of that, Fritz was categorized as a Geltungsjude, which meant that, in spite of the fact that his mother was Christian, he was counted as a full Jew under Nazi racial categories.

Fritz spent 12 years under Nazi rule from 1933, when Hitler came into power, until 1945 when the Nazi regime was destroyed by the Allied victors in the Second World War. Fritz, of course, had been a student throughout many of those

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years and eventually was going to Jewish school. And then in 1942, the Jewish school was closed, and he was sent into forced labor.

This is a photograph of Fritz with his maternal aunt, Elfride Dressler. And she provided Fritz and his family with extra food during those years, particularly as the rations that were given out to Jews diminished.

This is a photograph of Fritz with his parents at the end of the war. Fritz's parents stayed in Germany, and Fritz's father returned to his career as a judge in the German legal system.

Fritz left Germany and came to the United States. Today Fritz Gluckstein lives in Washington, DC, area with his wife Marin. Following his arrival in the United States after the Second World War, he became a doctor of veterinary medicine. He served for a brief stint in the US Army. And then he began a long and distinguished career with the federal government, where he became an expert on diseases that are transmitted from animals to humans, such as mad cow disease.

Fritz is a self-described opera buff and also an avid college football fan. Indeed, and I want to say something about Fritz, he's one of the he's the only person I know that can listen to the Metropolitan Opera broadcasts on Saturday on the radio and then watch a football game at the same time.

[LAUGHTER]

So Fritz is an unusual individual. And he's a wonderful person to talk to. Every week, Fritz volunteers here at the museum, translating letters and other documents written in German, including handwritten materials. And he's also one of the few people who's able to read this old German cursive script.

And if any of you have looked at that, you know how difficult that can be. And we're thankful to have Fritz, because it's important for us to go through a lot of those letters and documents that have families have given us, and Fritz plays an important role in translating those and transcribing those.

Fritz has a daughter Ruth, as well as two granddaughters, one aged 11 years old and the other 8.

With that, I would like you to join me in welcoming a First Person, Dr. Fritz Gluckstein. Fritz, can you join us?

[APPLAUSE]

Fritz, I want to thank you for joining us today and also for your willingness to speak in this First Person program. First question I want to ask you concerns your early years. You were very young when Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933. And I was wondering if you could tell us a little bit about your experiences then, what your memories were of those early years of Nazi rule.

It was a very peaceful life. My father was decorated in the First World War, was quite patriotic, always hang out the flag on holidays, even taught me how to salute the flag.

And now, my mother wasn't Jewish, and of course, I had many non-Jewish friends and relatives. And so I had the best of two worlds, Hanukkah and Christmas, Passover and Easter. It was a very good life. [LAUGHTER]

And of course, there's one thing. We didn't have a car. Driving a car was a luxury. My father always assured, next year, next year, but of course, it never happened.

Now, how did your life change when the Nazis came to power?

1933, my father lost his job. And the day he had to leave office, they told him, don't leave by the front door. There is a demonstration of Brownshirts. Well, said my father, I came in by the front door, and I'm going to leave by the front door. And so he did.

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Of course, he lost his job and money was quite tight. We had to move to a smaller apartment. But my good aunt stood by us, took care of birthday parties to shoes. And I must also say my mother's relatives stood by us. That wasn't always the case. Many times, the non-Jewish relatives distanced themselves.

But my father's colleagues, it was different. I still remember one colleague, supposedly a very good friend, he came with flowers. He was so sorry, we have to break up all contact with you.

Now, you were going to school at this time.

Yes.

What was the attitude of your fellow students and your teachers?

My name is Gluckstein. It means "good luck stone." And I always had good luck. And in '33 I was six years old. I had to go to school, a grade school, and was very fortunate.

Grade School Number 12 was an exception to the other schools. In other schools, Jewish students were separated, harassed, forced to sing so-called patriotic songs. But not in this school.

The principal tried to keep out Nazi elements. The homeroom teacher was a party member, but he treated six other Jewish students and me like any other student.

I might as well point out the fact that somebody was a party member did not mean he was a Nazi or antisemite. Take an example. Suppose a man works for insurance company. They tell him, look, friend, you better join the party. Otherwise you'll wind up in [NON-ENGLISH], no more promotions.

Well, two children, mother-in-law lives with him. The man was not a hero. He joined. Or even a prominent, famous conductor, Karajan-- he was no Nazi. But he wanted to become music director, Generalmusikdirektor in Aachen. Well, he joined.

But did you encounter antisemitism from any of your fellow students or on the streets or--

Eventually the principal couldn't keep out certain Nazi elements. Students then had to leave and go to a Jewish school. Yes. At that time, you found signs at restaurants, Jews are not welcome. Or you took a trip to a suburb or so on, Jews enter at their own risks. That happened.

But at the Olympic games in 1936, all those signs disappeared. You could go everywhere. The moment the games were over, the signs were up again. Actually, they have special benches in the parks. Yes, antisemitism showed its head.

Now, in thinking back over that time period, like when you were going to school, did what you were learning in school change as a result of the Nazi influence?

Well, actually once we went to the Jewish school-- it was a German school. Actually, we were still under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and strict discipline.

If you were caught sneezing without a handkerchief, you were severely criticized. And you didn't laugh, ha, ha, ha. One laughed silently.

And there's still one thing I can't do. I still can't do that. Now, why not? If you did that, they asked you, ah, you are going on a trip? Why on a trip? Well, you packed your hands already.

[LAUGHTER]

But actually, we learned Hebrew and religious instruction, special religious instruction, even under the Nazis. And we also learned German history and all the others. It was actually basically a German school.

But what about the children in your neighborhood, the kids that you played with? Did a number of them go into the Hitler Youth, or did they--?

Yes, but actually I personally didn't have too much difficulties. There were some antisemites building and so on, but with the whole, unfortunately, too.

Now, let me ask you about an event from November 1938, which the Nazis unleashed waves of incredible violence against Germany's Jews that we have referred to as The Night of Broken Glass. I was wondering if you could tell us about your memories of that time.

Yes, I remember it. We went to school and saw the first broken window. Second broken window. With the third broken window, I realized something had happened. And then there's already smoke coming up.

And of course, I realized that something had happened. The question is, how did they know at that time what windows to break? They didn't have lists.

About two months prior to the pogrom, each Jewish proprietor had to have his name in tall, white letters at the upper-left corner of his store window. All they had to do? Go and break. And I realized all the windows that had those white letters were broken.

I went to school. Some of our teachers were no longer there. They rounded up men at random, sent them to concentration camp. My father was fortunate and escaped. Some of my teachers weren't. I still remembered, too, later on we got a note being sent home, because of the special circumstances, the report cards may be late because many of the teachers were sent to the concentration camp.

And of course after that, Jews were not permitted to have cars, were not permitted to go to movies, theaters. In fact, Jews could not collect insurance money.

As part of this intensification of anti-Jewish policy, the Nazis also wanted to force all of Germany's Jews to leave. Did your family ever consider emigrating?

Yes. But, well, in order to go to the United States, you need an affidavit. And actually what happened first, you have to get an affidavit. Then there were numbers, quarters. You had to wait till your quarter came.

And once, very often, the quarter first, you got affidavit, then your quarter was called. By that time, you had to raise money. And by the time you raised the money, it was too late. They go to others.

Many countries weren't very welcoming to Jews. Yes, after 1938, people realized things going to get worse.

And they did get worse.

Yes.

With the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939, the war dramatically affected the lives of Jews, not only in Germany but elsewhere in Europe. And I was wondering, how did the outbreak of war affect you and your family?

Well, I would say the vise closed. Immediately, Russian Jews got special ration cards. The rations were quite small, no white bread, no meat. And Jews were only allowed to shop between 4:00 and 5:00 in the afternoon.

My mother could go if nobody was around. The decent storekeeper looked around here. And there are two people

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around just watching to report, ah, the person went to the store after 5:00.

And of course Jews were not permitted to subscribe or buy a newspaper. We were not allowed to go to a barber and, of course, hand over radio, gold, diamonds, furs, and so on.

And actually, had to hand over their pets, too. We were allowed to take a pet from a friend who at that time was close to a deportation, and they gave us a dog. And he was specially trained, I remember. When you showed him something for the Nazi, he didn't take it. But you said from the Jew, he grabbed it.

[LAUGHTER]

We kept him a short while and then found a good home for him.

Do you think that experience with that dog influenced your later decision to become a veterinarian?

Perhaps. We always had animals.

As anti-Jewish policy escalated, in 1941 they introduced a law in Germany. The Jews had to wear the yellow star. And this was something that was announced in newspapers. Joseph Goebbels, the minister of propaganda, had been pushing for this. And I was wondering if you could tell us about your experiences and those of your family.

Yes, yellow star-- each star had to be fixed right here, had to be very tight. If there was a nasty policeman, he came with a pencil. If he could get behind the star, we were in trouble. And to add insult to injury, we had to hand over coupons, clothing coupons, to buy the star.

But actually, the population behaved better than we expected. There was not a riot or people harassed. Very rarely it happened. But what happened to me at least three times, I walk on the street and somebody came and gave me a can of milk or can of some other food. If they had hoped that people would rise up, they didn't, at least not in Berlin.

Now, in some parts-- I remember reading some accounts where some German Jews would try to hide the star, whether carrying a coat over that--

Oh, yes, camouflaging, well, sometimes you wore a briefcase or a book. And there were times where you simply had to cover it up. But it was certainly risky.

And what about being called not wearing this star?

Well, it happened to me once. We had to leave our apartment. Jews moved together, three or four families. Well, when we moved, we stored some of our furniture and household goods in the attic of a friend. And I wanted to get some stuff. And of course, I took a star. I didn't want to advertise the fact that a Jew is storing something upstairs.

And then I walked down the street, and suddenly, stop. And I knew right away this was the Gestapo. You could tell how they carried themselves. Why did you stop me? Well, what was a young fellow doing out of uniform, maybe a deserter? Well, I showed him I had a special exclusion paper from the armed forces. Of course, he knew right away. It said Fritz Israel.

Each male Jew had to take the name Israel, and female it was Sarah. It said Fritz Israel, and he knew right away. And I knew I was in trouble, because a good friend, schoolmate of mine, had been caught two weeks prior. They barely escaped deportation.

There I was, standing actually beside myself, extra corporeal experience. What would he do? Well, what did he do? Looked me over.

I believe-- I don't for sure, but I think he was deliberating whether my German or Jewish blood was predominant. Of

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course, he looked it over, gave it back, turned around. Good luck. Could have been much worse.

Now, in the wake of that piece of legislation, the deportations of German Jews to ghettos in occupied Poland, and then the occupied Soviet Union started occurring. Were you aware of--

Oh, yes. Actually, in the beginning was very orderly. People received a notification, you will be deported on that day, and here are some lists. Fill out the list, list your belongings, and a certain date. Police, usually ordinary, non-clothed men came. Sealed the apartment, and the people proceeded to a collection point.

Later on was not that orderly. When at school, yes, you realize sometimes the neighbor wasn't there. And they hoped he would be sick, but was deported.

But of course, when I still mention in school, at that time the teachers still came every day to teach us. In the face of imminent deportation, the school was an oasis. Once we were inside, we forgot all the harassment and danger.

We didn't realize that at that time that our teachers were actually everyday heroes. But now, later on, I realize what I owe them, what we owe them.

I mean, those are remarkable stories of what they did to try to both educate you and also give you this oasis from persecution.

Absolutely.

And you went to this school until 1942.

1942, I remember the last report card, reason given why is that the last report card, and I quote, "because of the ordered dissolution of the Jewish school system." That was in June 1942.

And so after that, then you were how old, about 16 or so?

Yes, pretty close.

And something happened to you on your 16th birthday that I think the audience will be interested in.

My mother at one time accompanied friends to the collection points. And there, what are you doing accompanying those Jews? I bet you have Jewish family. All right, tomorrow your husband and son will report downtown to a collection point. It was an old people's home, Grosse-Hamburger-Strasse.

OK, next morning, we-- my father and I-- reported. And they put us in the room with about 10 other men, mattresses on the floor. And the commandant was a notorious brutal SS captain Brunner from Vienna, brought to Berlin to speed up things.

And he had forbidden us to lie down during the day. He used to sneak up, go up and try to catch us. And the building was guarded by regular policemen. And they were very decent. They went ahead and said, get up, get up, he's coming-- remarkable. Had they been caught, the least what would happen to them-- Eastern Front.

Then after a week or so, suddenly I was told that in 20 minutes I had to report to Captain Brunner for interrogation. Well, my father and a distinguished journalist prepared me for the ordeal. Well, Fritz, don't be a hero. Don't contempt or hostility. Answer the question fully, but don't volunteer anything.

When I come down there, there sits Brunner behind the desk, and the side about a dozen SS Berlin, probably wanted to learn what's being done. Well, he tried to get me some trick questions. But after a while he said, well, what you're doing right now?

At that time I was working as a messenger at one of the local Jewish Community Centers. Well, I'm going to give you a real job. Tomorrow you report to the labor exchange to get a decent job. Out.

And I step out, to my surprise as I find my father to be stepped out into the street. And I remember the date. It was my 16th birthday. I still wonder why Brunner wanted to see me. I suspect, too, he wanted to see how does a so-called Mischling look like. But I was lucky.

And you went to the labor exchange, and you were assigned a job?

In a factory doing some-- I don't know what, certain material, instruments for the air force. And then, of course, happened the notorious factory action.

It was Saturday morning. And a good friend and classmate, high school classmate who work together, suddenly door opened, SS officer enters. Everybody out. And assembled outside the building, escorts, and the officer asked for the truck to come, the truck and two SS men in back. And there we went downtown.

You can imagine. It was Saturday, and some of the women were concerned. Normally children were at daycare. Saturdays we were at home. Poor women didn't know what would happen to the children.

Well, we wound up downtown in a former dance hall called the Clue. The tables and chairs had been pushed aside, and here we are sitting there in the middle.

And my friend Kurt and I, it was about eight hours. And after eight hours, we were interrogated by police, actually quite decent. They were plainclothes policemen.

And they said, well, I tell you, we want to say get out. And they let us go. They shouldn't have done that. They should have sent us to still another collection point.

Well, there my friend Kurt and I were out in the street at 8 o'clock and broke the law. Why? No Jews were allowed after 8 o'clock at night on the streets.

Yeah, well in 1943 when this occurred, this was after the German defeated Stalingrad. Goebbels, who was the propaganda minister, but also was the Nazi party leader of the Berlin area, wanted to deport all of the Jews in Berlin to Auschwitz. And so they had this factory action to round up those Jews that had been working in German factories for the war effort.

Now, there was another interesting incident that occurred shortly thereafter.

I went home. My father had been picked up. He had been working in another factory. My mother at that time happened to visit an aunt, was away in Silesia. And I sent a telegram saying it would be a good idea if you come back.

Well, it was the end of the month. On Monday, somebody had to pick up the ration cards. Well, I set out to get the ration cards. Right in front of the ration card office was a moving van, everybody with a yellow star put on that man.

And we went to still another collection point. It happened to be a synagogue where I had become bar mitzvah, been confirmed when I was 13. There I stayed a short while. Another van and still another point downtown, an administrative building of the Jewish community. And there all husbands of intermarriages and Geltungsjuden like me were put in there.

Well, they put us in a room, 15 men, no mattresses, just barely room to lie down. Well, we spent our time speculating what would happen to us and standing in line to use the toilet facilities. Of course, the building wasn't set up for a sudden influx of people.

After a week, I was told release, OK? Went downstairs, and there to my surprise found my father, standing in line of

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release slips to be filled out by the members of the secretaries of the Jewish community. And of course, they had to be signed by the commandant, Sergeant Snyder.

And then one afternoon he passed by and he signed it, my father right in front of me. And he looked and said, ah, a judge you have been. I think you certainly have ruined the lives of many people. Well, said my father, I hope not, and left. And they let us out.

What we didn't know, what had happened in the meantime, there had been a demonstration of the non-Jewish wives and mothers. They demonstrated outside, asking for our release. First the police tried to disperse them. Didn't work.

Then actually the SS came. They didn't move. And finally as can be seen from the diaries of Goebbels, which you mentioned, he felt that wasn't a good time. We handle the intermarriages later on, particularly right after what happened at Stalingrad.

So they let us out and didn't go back to the factory. But we were assigned to labor crews to clean up after air raids throughout Berlin.

That's quite a remarkable incident. It was the first real public protest in Germany against deportation of Jews. And it was done by the non-Jewish spouses of these Jewish men that had been imprisoned there. And it's been the subject of films and books, and it's quite a remarkable and unique event in German history during that time period.

Now after that, you went into forced labor. And what did you do in forced labor?

Cleaning up after air raids, pulling down walls. Lucky again, one day a wall came down, and what was under it? Well, a big bomb had to ever [? go?] back, but lucky again.

[LAUGHTER]

Because of the bombing raids by the Allies, you had to move several times.

Yes.

And at one stage you also were involved in building fortifications and tank traps.

Actually what happened, at one time the Russians already on German soil, the Western powers at the Rhine, they detached us to build the foundation for a New Berlin after the war. But only for two weeks. Then they sent us to the southern border of Berlin to build tank obstacles. And there we worked 24 hours, dug ditches, put in beams, metal beams in 45 angles to the ground. After 24 hours, they let us go.

But before we left, we looked at our handiwork and said, now, how long will it take the Russians to get through there? Well, we decided 31 minutes.

[LAUGHTER]

Why 31 minutes? The tanks will come to the obstacles there. The crew will laugh, stop the crew, will laugh for 30 minutes, will take them one minute to get through.

[LAUGHTER]

Actually that happened, something by the time. Marshal Konev came. Two armies approached Berlin, on the east and on the south. The southern army got in so fast that at the place where at that time we lived, a little street fighting and they couldn't get to us. We didn't do a very good job with those.

[LAUGHTER]

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But did you consider that sabotage?

Yes.

[LAUGHTER]

One of the things that I think comes clearly out of this is your sense of humor. And do you think that played a role in keeping your spirits up during this dark time?

Absolutely. This helped us. Every morning a crew got together, a little story, first some rumors, and then the last stories that circulated. Here is one. Goebbels, minister of volk enlightenment and propaganda, fell into the River Spree. That's a river that snakes through Berlin. Young man pulls him out.

Well, said Goebbels, my boy, you saved my life. What can I do for you? Well, I want a state funeral. Why? Well, when my father finds out I pulled you out of the river, he's going to kill me.

[LAUGHTER]

Or something more serious, SS to a Jew, I'm going to kill you. But if you can tell me which one of my eyes is made of glass, I'll let you go. Oh, that is easy. It's the right one. Now, how did you know? Well, you're right one, your glass eye, it looks so human.

[LAUGHTER]

And then there's another one. Of course, everything was substituted. Everything was what they called ersatz, a butter substitute, this substitute. When will the war be over? Well, when the British eat rats and the Germans eat rat substitute.

[LAUGHTER]

One of the unusual things about Berlin as well is-- aside from the humor that's very much a part of that culture-- is the fact that you had thousands of Jews that went underground during the Holocaust and hid there. Did you know any of the people that went into hiding? Did you consider that for yourself?

Yes. One person actually stayed. We moved together as a family, and one person, a lawyer, stayed there in hiding. Unfortunately there were some so-called-- you call them grabbers, people who went around trying to find Jews hiding. That happened, too.

Yeah, that's also a very interesting story about-- even Jews who were, to save their own lives and those of their families, would inform on--

That happened. Sadly that happened.

And up until the final year, 1945, did you have that fear that you were going to be deported? Was there a sense that--

No, actually, we had our rucksacks ready, but we-- well, you live from day to day and hope for the best.

Now, 1945, the Red Army came and took Berlin--

Actually, they came one day. We were working close to a SS barracks. And what did we see? What a delight-- the SS men pushing trucks. They didn't have enough gasoline. We knew if even the SS, if they don't have enough gasoline, the demise of the Third Reich must be at hand.

Now, before we actually get to the end of the war, I wanted to bring up one encounter that you had with an individual

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who became-- who was notorious for his role in the so-called final solution of the Jewish question. That was Adolf Eichmann. And I was wondering if you could tell the story of how you encountered Eichmann in Berlin?

We were bumped out a second time, stayed at the Jewish hospital. One morning going to work outside the building was a van, SS, here, here, out here by-- assigned to special duty, here on the truck.

Well, after half an hour, the doors opened, and we were at the headquarters of Colonel Eichmann. He was a moving force behind the deportation. His headquarters had taken a hit, and they had gotten us to clean up. I was lucky, too. My immediate supervisor was a young lieutenant who didn't belong there.

But one day, we were working, and suddenly, Eichmann is coming. Well, I wondered. Everybody knew who Eichmann was. And I was looking down. I wondered, now, how would he look, I wondered. And there he came, ordinary. Nobody would have noticed in the crowd. Stood right next to me, gave some instructions, and left. This was Eichmann. Some way I wouldn't say disappointed, but I expected more.

[LAUGHTER]

1945, the Red Army took Berlin. I was wondering, what were your feelings at the time of liberation? And how did the Soviets look at you and your family since you had survived in Berlin?

Well, actually, towards the end of-- we couldn't work anymore. Artillery shells fell into the street. And we awaited the Russians.

At that time, of course, little food, stayed in the basement. You had to go out and get water. Berlin had many horse-drawn vehicles and still pumps. What did you do? Grabbed two buckets, ran out to the pump, filled them.

On the way back, incoming round hits the ground, lost half of your water, went back, and the last days, even there I was lucky. Waiting for water, a shell came down, and the neighbor was killed. I was still alive. I was extremely lucky.

But even at that moment, five minutes to 12:00, two minutes to 12:00, they had little green papers distributed saying, Berlin stays German. Just like Napoleon, before Moscow, the Russian army is going to be defeated to the very last moment. It was actually tabloids till the last moment.

And the Russians came. At that time I was away to get some bread, actually quite orderly. The baker still handed out what they had left. And I came back, and the Russians were there. Didn't believe we were Jews. Oh, no, no. No, Jews? Can't be. But someone there spoke some Russian and we in some way persuaded them that we were not the deserters or Nazis.

So after the war was over, what happened to your father and your parents?

Well, actually, we moved out, and actually the transition was quite difficult. It wasn't everything rosy. Americans came in '45. And at that time, one month the Russians took care of the food, dark bread. Next month, the Americans or Western power, white bread.

And it was very cold. And we were close to the woods, get our own firewood at the first camping [INAUDIBLE]. And at that time, the currency was cigarettes. The care packages had cigarettes. There was a currency.

Even remember there was-- Camels were the most valuables and followed by Lucky Strike and Chesterfield. Last one was Old Gold. But they were all welcome. And then, too, I remember when I was ready to come to the States, right before, going up to the ship, the boat, somebody was telling us, ladies and gentlemen, the moment you set foot on the boat, remember a cigarette is just a cigarette.

[LAUGHTER]

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Let me ask you this, Fritz. Were any of your father's family deported?

Actually, only that died before, yes. They deported our cousin Dorothy. I never forget her. She drove a car. A woman driving a car at that time was remarkable.

And her little son was three or four years old. They sent them to England at the Kindertransport. He is still there. And I don't know where he is right now. But all the others had already left to Shanghai, and only one cousin.

Did you get a sense after the War of the extent of the Nazi destruction of European Jewry? You had some understanding about the deportations beginning in 1941 and afterwards. But did you understand where they were going?

Actually we knew deportation well, resettling they told us. Yes, you're going to be settled there, but life will be normal. And they always sometimes postcards and even we sent some food. We knew no more postcards, no more requests for food.

We know something was going on. The full extent of the catastrophe and Auschwitz and Birkenau we didn't know. And that came to light afterwards, yes.

Now, your parents decided to stay in Germany and you decided to emigrate.

Yes, I went back to school to make up for lost time after three years. Special cautious was quite difficult. Things have gotten better, but I felt it wasn't my duty to rebuild Germany. I decided to come to the United States.

My father told me, like you said, if I were 10 years younger, your mother and I would go with you. But what can I do? Law is completely different in the United States. I can't practice my profession. But you go.

But he said, I hope you will choose a profession that is not limited to one country like law. Well, I didn't. I became a veterinarian.

Well, it was a very good advice that your father gave you. Well, let me stop here and open this up for questions, because I'm sure that a number of you probably have questions. And I think we have a little time for those. Yes, over there. Yeah.

Can I talk?

Yeah, sure.

As both a German citizen and a Jew, do you or did you or have you ever had any resentment towards your country or against your culture because of what happened to you in Berlin?

Resentment I wouldn't say. Look, there couldn't be any hate. How could I? My mother was German. My aunt was a German. Not all Germans are Nazis, antisemites, but the whole German mentality, no.

As my father used to say, the Germans were very good on the battlefield as soldiers, but when it comes to civil courage, no.

Thank you.

Think there-- was there a question back there? Oh, OK, then let me go here. Yeah.

Did you feel hatred towards Germans?

What?

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Did you feel hatred toward the Germans?

Did you feel hatred towards the Germans after what happened?

No, not hatred. But in some way I still sometimes wonder how could have happened. So the Germans, the people, what they have done so much in science, arts, even culture, philosophy, how could have happened?

But no, I-- look, I've been back to Germany show to to my family and all professionally. I go over there, and the opera is nice, and the beer is nice, but after 10 or 14 days, I come back. I go. That's nice. But home is here. This is my home here.

OK, let me go here, and then I'll go here. Yeah.

Yes, Fritz, do you dream much about these times in your life? And have those dreams diminished in time? And you also have a particular dream you dream more than other?

Occasionally yes. If you want I still got two hang-ups, things I don't like. I still don't like high boots. And something else-- I don't like small pieces of soap. Soap was a precious. We used to take soap and put aluminum foil on one side to keep it longer.

But otherwise, I must say I am quite fortunate. Occasionally, yes, if I see television or something, things come to mind and remember what have happened. But the whole, I'm quite fortunate.

How would you respond to people who deny that the Holocaust ever happened?

I wonder what you could argue with those people. I think there's two things. They're either stupid or malicious.

[LAUGHTER]

[APPLAUSE]

Yes.

You seem very fortunate to have lived through the war. How many of your classmates do you know survived [INAUDIBLE]?

There were 35 when school was closing, about 35. And I would say about six. Four were [INAUDIBLE], one in hiding, and one returned from a concentration camp.

OK, let me go back. Yeah.

On any of your subsequent visits back to Germany, did you have a chance to visit any of the concentration camps?

Yes, we went to Sachsenhausen.

What kind of emotions did that evoke when you were there?

I still must say I've heard so much about it. And I've seen pictures. But once you are there, it's actually shocking still at that time. Really, in some way you actually relived-- in some way and to a certain degree, you can feel what those people suffered. It was quite-- yes.

Here and then--

I think you said that your father was a judge. And do you believe that because he was a judge he had special treatment

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by the Germans?

Not because a judge, maybe because he was a veteran. Let me tell you what happened. In 1933, they dismissed my father. In 1935 in the name of the Fuhrer, he got another decoration because he was on the front lines. Probably that happened. But otherwise, no. Many of my father's colleagues were deported-- not at all.

I think we have one more question.

Outward aggression obviously would have been very dangerous. But how did you fight back subversively? How did you rebel in your own way that would not be construed as outward aggression?

To keeping going, being there. I realized from day to day but that you have to hold out. You have to go on. You can't have armed resistance, but the fact that you didn't despair, went to work, and went on living, I think that was resistance.

Before I turn to our First Person to conclude our program, I want to thank all of you for being with us today and spending this time with Fritz and myself. And I also want to remind you that you can access the First Person podcast and other museum podcasts at our website www.ushmm.org and at iTunes. And we hope that you'll be able to join us for other First Person events here at the museum.

And it's in keeping with our tradition here at the museum and with our First Person programs that we give the last word to our guest for today. So I want to turn to you, Fritz, and offer you the last words.

It has been my good fortune to come to the United States. And I'm ever grateful for the help received and the opportunity given to me. I value my American citizenship most highly.

And I'm often asked what I have learned. And I always say the same. Don't do to others what you don't want done to yourself.

And then to do it now. Write that letter. Pay that visit. Make that phone call. If you have a dream, go after it now. If you have two bottles of wine, drink the better one first.

[LAUGHTER]

[APPLAUSE]

I want to thank you very much, Fritz, for this. And also I wanted to also mention that Fritz will be signing copies of some stories that he's written in the museum shop or just outside right in the lobby here.

And please feel free to chat with Fritz after the event. And I think he's going to rush out to go to the signing.

Well, I didn't know about that.

Yeah. So we'll let Fritz exit first, and then you can all join-- speak with him outside the hall. Thank you very much again.

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