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UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM
***FIRST PERSON* SERIES**
Speaker: FRANK LIEBERMANN

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>> Bill Benson: 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. We are in our 15th year of *First Person*. Our *First Person* today is Mr. Frank Liebermann, whom we shall meet shortly.

This 2014 season of *First Person* is made possible through the generosity of the Louis Franklin Smith Foundation with additional funding from the Helena Rubinstein Foundation to whom we are grateful for their sponsorship. I'm pleased to let you know that Mr. Louis Smith is here with us today.

[Applause]

Thank you, Louis.

First Person is a series of 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. Our program will continue twice weekly through mid-August. The museum's web site, www.ushmm.org, provides information about our upcoming *First Person* guests. Anyone interested in keeping in touch with the museum and its programs can complete the Stay Connected card in your program today or speak with a representative at the back of the theater when we finish our program. In doing so you will receive an electronic copy of Frank Liebermann's biography so that you can remember and share his testimony after you leave here today.

Frank Liebermann will share his *First Person* account of his experience during the Holocaust and as a survivor for about 45 minutes. If time allows, there will be an opportunity

for you to ask Frank some questions.

The life stories of Holocaust survivors transcend the decades. What you are about to hear from Frank is one individual's account of the Holocaust. We have prepared a brief slide presentation to help with his introduction.

We begin with this photograph of Frank Liebermann. He was born in Gliwice, Germany in 1929. He was the only child of Hans and Lotte Liebermann. On the left we see Hans Liebermann and on the right we see Lotte and her granddaughter Joannie.

Both of Frank's parents' families had lived in this part of Germany for several generations. Frank is pictured with his paternal grandparents, Bernard and Jenny Liebermann. Hitler came to power in 1933, and when Frank began school in 1935, Jewish students were separated from the non-Jewish students and fear of anti-Semitic attacks became frequent. Pictured here is Frank's first grade class on the first day of school. The cones they are holding contain sweets to make school sweet. Frank is in the second row, the fourth from the right. I don't know if you can see my cursor, but there we go.

In 1936, Frank's father was no longer able to practice medicine as a result of anti-Jewish laws. In 1938, the family tried to obtain visas to come to the United States. Hans traveled first and Frank and his mother followed a few months later in October of 1938. Here we see Frank's mother's ticket for the ship they took to the United States.

The Liebermann family settled in Ohio and Frank went on to graduate from Western Reserve, now Case Western Reserve University, in 1950 with a degree in chemistry. After graduation Frank started a long and successful career in the textile industry in New York City.

In that same year he married Marianne, his wife of nearly 64 years. Frank worked in textile manufacturing until 1992 when he and Marianne moved to the Washington, DC, area to be closer to their children. Frank would last three months in retirement before going into the travel business which he continues today, specializing in Europe and U.S. travel, including Alaska. He just recently joined a new agency, Signature Travel, in Maryland.

Frank and Marianne have three children, two daughters and a son. Their daughters, Nancy and Joan, live in this area and their son Jerry is in Seattle. They have five grandchildren with the youngest about to turn 23. As Frank notes, are now gainfully employed. His grandson is preparing for his Ph.D. in modern European history. Frank notes that Aaron is motivated by the family's history. Frank, Aaron, and Aaron's sister Elissa went to Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia in 2013. They stopped in Gliwice, the city in which Frank was born and is now part of Poland.

I'm glad to say Marianne and their close friends Tom and Peggy are here with us today. Actually, Marianne wasn't able to make it. Tom and Peggy in the front row, good friends of Frank and Marianne's.

Frank volunteers with the Museum’s Visitor Services where you will find him Thursday mornings. As part of his responsibilities, he speaks with various groups visiting the Museum. He also has spoken to wounded veterans at the recently closed Walter Reed Hospital.

With that I would like you to join me in welcoming our *First Person*, Frank Liebermann.

[Applause]

Thank you for joining us, Frank, and for your willingness to be our *First Person*. We have so much for you to tell us in our hour. We'll start right away.

You told me that your earliest memories start in 1934 when you were 5 years old. You also said of that time, that “all-in-all it was a good time” for your parents. Tell us why that was so and what you can about your family and their life in Gliwice and about yourself in those first years of your life.

>> Frank Liebermann: My father was an ear, nose, throat surgeon. We lived on the main street, which is common in Europe because they had street car connections. Very few people had cars at that time. We had an apartment in back of the office. One of the exciting things that happened in 1934 is that we got a miniature convertible, literally miniature.

[Laughter]

Smaller than a VW. We used that to visit my grandparents, living about 50 miles in one direction; the other ones about 20 miles further east. On my first trip, I'm told -- oh, I have to say, horses were still used widely for making deliveries. And the first time I went to the country and saw cows, I said, "What funny looking horses."

[Laughter]

>> Bill Benson: The fact that you had a car was unusual, that the family had a car; right?

>> Frank Liebermann: Definitely. It was not used -- my father took the street car to the hospital. That was a better way of getting around. In fact, we were to walk about three blocks to get to a garage because you couldn't park it anywhere.

>> Bill Benson: And your father, as you mentioned, was a surgeon. Tell us a little bit about your father's family business.

>> Frank Liebermann: You mean my mother's --

>> Bill Benson: I'm sorry. Your mother's family business. Yeah.

>> Frank Liebermann: In 1933, my mother's side of the family celebrated the 100th Anniversary of their business in Germany where they had a wholesale leather business with a tannery. When things started getting bad, they were one of those people who said, "Things will blow over. We survived starvation during World War I by bartering. This, too, shall pass." We were the only ones who got out.

>> Bill Benson: Frank, you started school in 1935, attending a public school. You told me that recess was the most dangerous time for you. Can you say a little bit about that?

>> Frank Liebermann: We had to leave the building. The playground was divided between boys on one side, girls on the other side. Our teachers stayed in the middle to try to give us some protection. We had three classrooms within the school of what was a public school. In fact, we got permission to arrive a little bit later and leave five minutes earlier so that we could safely get away from the grounds in order not to be subject to being attacked.

>> Bill Benson: So Jewish kids had three classrooms in this large public school.

>> Frank Liebermann: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: How large was the Jewish population in Gliwice?

>> Frank Liebermann: About 1,000 families.

>> Bill Benson: It was a major city.

>> Frank Liebermann: The city was about 120,000. So it was a pretty small proportion. The Jewish population in Germany was about one half of one percent. So it was easy to target.

>> Bill Benson: Right. Frank, before we move on to the events that led up to your leaving Germany, tell us a little bit about your mother.

>> Frank Liebermann: In what --

>> Bill Benson: Tell us about her from those early years. She met your father after he was well established.

>> Frank Liebermann: Oh. They met through a friend at a fraternity social when she was 16 and waited until my father had finished his residency and specialty training. They got married in 1928. She was 20.

>> Bill Benson: And then you were born, of course, a year later.

>> Frank Liebermann: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: One more point about that time, about your family. I think you told me that you could trace family living there in that area as far back as the 1700s. So your family had been established for many, many years in this part of Germany.

>> Frank Liebermann: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: Back a couple of centuries. --

>> Frank Liebermann: Yes. In other words, really going way back, Jews were never allowed to own land. They stayed in small cities and then gradually integrated after Napoleon, really, who furthered integration. They felt very much part of the community. The Holocaust got everybody totally unprepared.

>> Bill Benson: And leading up to that, in 1936, circumstances for your parents turn more ominous, became more difficult if not dangerous. Tell us what was significant. What changed in 1936?

>> Frank Liebermann: After World War I there was a war between partly England, France. They kind of tried to fill in the vacuum between Russia and Germany. This is when Czechoslovakia was established as part of the Austria Hungarian Empire, in other words, was separated. Poland was established after having been dominated by foreign powers for very many years. In order to protect the minorities because populations were mixing, there was a treaty that for 50 years minorities would be protected on either side of the border. That treaty was over in 19 -- treaty was over in 1936. So even though the Nazi laws started earlier in the rest of Germany, the border area was relatively still minority-friendly and then lost those protections very suddenly in 1936.

>> Bill Benson: Just because that treaty expired.

>> Frank Liebermann: Expired.

>> Bill Benson: In that same year, in 1936, your mother made a trip to Israel for a very specific purpose. Tell us about her trip to Israel in ‘36.

>> Frank Liebermann: She went together with one of her brothers to explore whether -- if there was a way of making a living. They came back with the realization that in Israel -- I think there was one doctor for every 100 people and that doctors were becoming chicken farmers because there's no way of making a living. And that kind of vetoed the idea of going to Israel. The way we got to the United States was because my grandfather was a genealogist and he

found this relative.

>> Bill Benson: Before we turn to that, as your parents began trying to think of how they were going to get out of Germany, Israel wasn't going to work, one of the memories you have is that your parents told you that it was urgent for you to learn how to swim.

>> Frank Liebermann: They said there's a strong possibility that we'll take an ocean voyage. The pool is going to close in July of 1936 with the end of the minority protection laws. It's imperative that you learn how to swim before that. As it got close, my grandfather came with me to the pool and said, "We are not going home until you take a test;" which, at that time, required 20 minutes non-stop swimming or treading water.

>> Bill Benson: Was your grandfather able to go home?

>> Frank Liebermann: We went home with a certificate.

[Laughter]

>> Bill Benson: During that time, 1936 and 1937, tell us about your father, how your father was doing from a work standpoint with the anti-Semitic laws taking full effect.

>> Frank Liebermann: Well, he was an ear, nose, throat surgeon. He lost his hospital privileges in 1936.

>> Bill Benson: So they were gone.

>> Frank Liebermann: They also had an SA. They were the brown shirts. There were two kinds of Nazi front line organizations. The SA were pretty much the beer hall thugs, if I can use that expression. The elite were the SS. And eventually the SS got rid of the SR, but they were used pretty much until close to World War II, and there was an SR, brown shirt, in front of

the office questioning anybody who wanted to go into the apartment house asking what their business was and if they wanted to go to my father's office, they took their name and said if you go in there, you'll have repercussions on your job. So it got pretty serious.

>> Bill Benson: So not only does he lose his hospital admitting privileges but the intimidation was so severe on his practice.

Frank, if you don't mind, I'm going to adjust your mic just a little bit if it's ok. See if that makes any kind of difference at all. There we go.

>> Frank Liebermann: I can't tell.

>> Bill Benson: During -- so your father's business is obviously really suffered. How was he able -- how was the family able to make ends meet during that period?

>> Frank Liebermann: We had to live frugally, off any savings that they had accumulated. And eventually my mother's father and grandfather said, “Look, maybe you should move. I'll support you.” Even though we had records of the business where the volume went down between 1933 and 1938 when the business was confiscated from 100,000 to 20,000. So, in other words, economic blockade was very substantial.

Also, by the way, bank accounts were frozen. You could only take enough money that was deemed by the government as necessary for living. And it was strictly forbidden to take any money out of the country.

>> Bill Benson: Tell us about the little space for a garden that your parents rented.

>> Frank Liebermann: Since it was dangerous to go to any parks or any specified playgrounds, outside of town they had what were known as gardens which they now have in

Brooklyn, by the way. They are parts where people in the neighborhood can grow fruits, vegetables, whatever it was. But these were a little bit bigger so that these became our supervised playgrounds. There were five families who participated. Everybody, the families, took turns taking us there to see that it was relatively safe.

>> Bill Benson: That was the one little safe haven to go play as kids.

Your family didn't keep a kosher kitchen yet you shopped for meat at a kosher establishment. Why was that?

>> Frank Liebermann: There were a thousand families. Some of them were religious. A lot of them were not. But the people who kept kosher couldn't buy enough to keep the butcher in business, so everybody used the kosher business in order to help the community.

>> Bill Benson: In January 1938, your father made a trip to the United States that became -- made it possible for him to move to the U.S. in June of that year. Tell us about his trip in January and the events that led up to his leaving for the United States in June of 1938.

>> Frank Liebermann: As we got -- as we located the relatives that my grandfather found, my father took a trip to New York and also had the family job of finding out if there were any other relatives because on my mother's side there was a family -- one of the family married Michael Gratz who became prominent during the revolutionary time in Philadelphia and founded a college. Rebecca Gratz was pretty well-known, but she never married. And he looked at the archives in Philadelphia. Her brother went west, which meant Louisville, Kentucky.

[Laughter]

At which there were no further records. So that part of the trip was unsuccessful. But he also

did register for the state boards in Ohio which passed half of all people taking the exams.

>> Bill Benson: State board for?

>> Frank Liebermann: For medicine. And then came back with an affidavit from the relative who was located that we wouldn't be on welfare for one year. Now, the affidavit which was used as a generic term committed you to get a number from the United States to apply for a visa. The quota, by the way, for the United States at that time was 25,000 people from Germany, limited pretty much to the proportion of the population as it existed in 1921.

>> Bill Benson: So the ability to get that visa under the quota was exceptionally difficult. Your father, tell us about his attempts to get his visa and, particularly, if you don't mind, about Fraulein Schmidt.

>> Frank Liebermann: We got a number in January when he applied. The quota -- we knew that the quota had not been filled. He called a friend of his and said, "What can I do to expedite my visa? After all, I can't work and we want to leave now that we have a chance." They said, well, it would be a good idea -- the counsel has a secretary by the name of Fraulein Schmidt. Fraulein means miss.

>> Bill Benson: And this was the U.S. Counsel's office.

>> Frank Liebermann: Yes. “Get a nice big box of candy.”

[Laughter]

Which he dutifully did. Another month passed. Nothing happened. And he called again. He said: By the way, did you put 100 marks into that box of candy?” The second box with 100 marks got us an appointment for a physical. We got the visa in the middle of June. My father

booked the next available ship to leave for the United States. The visa was good for 120 days.

Every person had permission to take 10 marks out of the country. That in 1938, currency values -- of the exchange was $2.50. That's probably about the equivalent of about $40, $50 today.

>> Bill Benson: That was the limit?

>> Frank Liebermann: That was the limit of what you could take out because the bank accounts were frozen.

>> Bill Benson: Before you tell us about your father leaving for the United States when he finally did get the visas, he canceled the lease that he had on his medical office and that prompted a visit from the Gestapo.

>> Frank Liebermann: Again, I mentioned frozen bank accounts. The equivalent of a lease was that you took a mortgage -- you gave the landlord a mortgage. In other words, you gave him a sum of money in safe keeping. And as long as he had that money, you were protected in your apartment house, store, whatever it was. When he canceled it, he got -- the mortgage was transferred to another bank where he had his account. Somebody at the landlord's bank reported to the Gestapo that a large sum of money had been withdrawn from the bank and they should check it out.

So the two Gestapo people came into the office and said, "You're under arrest." He said, "For what?" Said, "We got a report that you withdrew that sum of money." And he said, "It was transferred to my bank. Please, call the bank." Upon calling them he was fortunate that the president of the bank came to the phone and confirmed that the money was there, and

they left. But that gets pretty scary.

>> Bill Benson: And moreover, that money was not available to your father.

>> Frank Liebermann: No.

>> Bill Benson: It was gone.

>> Frank Liebermann: No. For all practical -- a frozen bank account means that it's yours but you can't do anything with it.

>> Bill Benson: Right.

>> Frank Liebermann: You can't take it out.

>> Bill Benson: So with the frozen bank account, with the equivalence of maybe $40, $50 in today's money, as the money that he was allowed to take out of the country, how was he able to figure out a way to finance his way to the United States and knowing that you and your mother would remain behind for a period of time?

>> Frank Liebermann: At that time you could still use money to buy an ocean ticket. If you bought -- if you went first class, you were able to get a fairly good spending allowance which is supposed to be used on the boat; like you go on a Caribbean cruise. And they encourage that. But at that time you were still able to take it out when you arrived in the United States. So basically that's how he existed.

And that's the reason -- the visa was for 120 days. That means that if my mother and I stayed in Germany until October, then we wouldn't have any expenses until he was almost ready to take the state boards. At that time he had a room for $5 a week in Cleveland while he was studying giving you an idea of this was still very much during the Depression.

That also is part of the background.

>> Bill Benson: So, Frank, your father gets here. He starts studying for his boards. He's living in a $5 a week place. You and your mother are still in Gliwice. You have a visa that's good until sometime in October. Tell us what you know about how your mother was able to both take care of you and her during that time and her preparation to get out before the visa expired.

>> Frank Liebermann: Basically, at that time you could still pack your belongings providing you pay 100% tax on everything that you take out. Among other things, she got a sewing machine so that if necessary if she had to sew clothes, she could do that. It was taxed at the full value, but the money had no meaning. So we did get out quite a bit of our furniture. They had that furniture until they died.

>> Bill Benson: That she was able to get out. During that time -- go ahead. I'm sorry.

>> Frank Liebermann: I was going to say, in September we got a barrage of telegrams. "Please get an earlier ship." We had no idea what it was because censorship was absolute. There was no free press. It was a capital crime to listen to outside radio stations. We had no idea whatsoever what it was about. Furthermore, when we -- we weren't able to get any earlier ship. When we finally did get to the boat in Bremerhaven, there was no ship.

>> Bill Benson: The one that you were scheduled to leave on.

>> Frank Liebermann: The one that we were scheduled to leave on. And we only found out what happened once we were on the ship. During this time you had Munich where Daladier of France and Chamberlain of England negotiated with Hitler for peace in our time by giving away

a large part of the Czech Republic without their knowledge or authorization. And that changed the balance of power in Europe because the potential allies lost 14 divisions at Germany's under belly.

During that time Hitler threatened the allies or what became the allies by calling back all of the ships at sea and saying that if I don't get what I want, I'm going to declare war. That ship was called back from already the beginning of the Atlantic Ocean and lost four days before all of that blew over.

The trip took six days.

>> Bill Benson: Before you tell us about that -- I do want you to tell us about that. While it was just you and your mother preparing to go, during that time you broke your arm. I would like you to share that, what happened.

>> Frank Liebermann: Ok. We were playing tag. I broke my arm. And that happens to have been -- that was not in that garden. That was a place where I went with my bicycle, a little bit out of town. You would normally call 911. My instincts told me that's not a good idea. I was able to ride home with one arm. I got home. My mother called up the orthopedic surgeon in town and said my son seems to have broken his arm, can you set it. He said, “No, I don't treat Jewish children.” She frantically called other people that she knew, including the hometown of my father where she located an orthopedist who said, “I'll take care of you, but here's what you have to do. Take a taxi to Bolton, which was a town, and go to the back, in through the backdoor, the freight entrance of the Catholic orphanage. I'll meet you there." He set my arm at that time. He gave instructions to my mother that once it was out of the cast -- I think it was

supposed to be on for five weeks. How my pediatrician should treat it in order to get the movement back.

>> Bill Benson: And, of course, the surgeons and the physicians that your mother had tried to get had been essentially colleagues of your father.

>> Frank Liebermann: They were colleagues. They went to meetings together. But the control that the Nazis got unbelievably fast is hard to imagine.

>> Bill Benson: So October 1938, shortly before your visa was expiring, as you described, you went through the scare of the ship not being there but you were able to get the ship eventually and you made it to the United States. What do you remember about your trip across the Atlantic.

>> Frank Liebermann: By the way, I will mention real quick. It took six days for the ship to cross. Since the schedule was always seven days, it took four crossings in order to get back on schedule. We were the fourth crossing. This is how we got to New York.

>> Bill Benson: And what was that trip like for you, the excitement of reuniting with your father but also leaving behind what you were leaving behind?

>> Frank Liebermann: We had, by the way, the cheapest first class cabin which was right in front of the bow. This was during hurricane season. I spent hours watching the bow literally dive into the waves and then come up kind of with a jerk when the water was off. My mother never left the cabin. She pretty much had a breakdown.

On one day there were only six people in the first class dining. The other five were in the captain's table. I had a little table all for myself.

>> Bill Benson: So you make it to the United States. You go to Cleveland. You're reunited with your father. What was that like for you? Do you remember?

>> Frank Liebermann: It was happy that we got together, especially when we found out about Munich. And what he was trying to do to get us there. He had rented a one-bedroom apartment in this Cleveland. He had another month and a half of the state boards, which, by the way, he fortunately passed on the first try.

It went pretty smoothly from that point of view with one big exception. My parents went to a movie the first time. I think they had a Wednesday special, something like -- I don't know if it was 10 or 25 cents. And they asked a neighbor to look in on me. That was their first time out. At about 9:00 the telephone rang. My grandparents called that this was Kristallnacht; that my mother's brothers had been arrested, the business had been confiscated, what can they possibly do to help. Obviously he wasn't able to give an affidavit to anybody because there was no money.

>> Bill Benson: He couldn't guarantee their financial --

>> Frank Liebermann: He couldn't guarantee their financial -- their finances. So he took the next bus to New York for the gentleman who gave us an affidavit. A little bit of background, his father had gone to my great grandfather in 1905 saying that he urgently needs I think $3,000 or $5,000, which is a very substantial amount of money for a week. Because he was in trouble. He never heard from his father again. He took that money, came to the United States to establish himself. He did give my father the visa, but when he came back he said, "I can't take any more responsibility." Obviously this was too close. He turned it down. We weren't

able to do anything to help.

>> Bill Benson: And just to our audience's sake, that particular night that your parents were at the movie, you were home and got the call.

>> Frank Liebermann: I was home. I got the call. That was the longest hour I could ever remember. 9:00 for them is 3:00 in the morning. I knew something was wrong. At that time you don't know about person-to-person calls.

>> Bill Benson: Right.

>> Frank Liebermann: They came back at about 10:00. That's when we got all the details.

>> Bill Benson: And that night happened to be, as you said, Kristallnacht, what we call Night of Broken Glass.

>> Frank Liebermann: Night of Broken Glass.

>> Bill Benson: November 9 through 10, 1938.

Frank, several other things I'd love for you to tell us about before we close in a little while. We still have some time. You, of course, as you said, were able to bring some belongings out of Germany that you had to pay 100% tax on it. One of those items was a bicycle. Will you tell us about the unpacking of the bicycle?

>> Frank Liebermann: My parents had friends -- at this point I'll say acquaintances.

>> Bill Benson: At that time friends.

>> Frank Liebermann: Who had a bicycle and motorcycle shop. They said, you know, it would probably be helpful if we put them -- put Frank's bicycle into one of these packing boxes; that it takes as little room as possible in the lift. That's -- very similar to what is now called the

container. So she said fine. I took the bicycle over there. They brought it back. It was packed. And when we got to the United States, we got a letter. I don't know exactly at what time but when they knew that we had our date and address. They said that when you unpack your lift, take the seat off the bicycle; we packed some prohibited gold pieces into that bicycle which are quite valuable. Please keep those for us. They had in the meantime moved to Italy. I mean to Israel. They said, “We'll tell what you to do with them later.”

My father was livid. It was well packed. There were black cloths over it. But that could have cost me and my mother our lives for a lousy few gold pieces.

>> Bill Benson: So used you to smuggle those out of the country unknowingly.

>> Frank Liebermann: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: After your father passed his boards, you moved, I believe, to Dayton.

>> Frank Liebermann: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: Your father wanted to establish himself there. Will you tell us that story about getting himself established in Dayton?

>> Frank Liebermann: He moved to Dayton because there were no Jewish ear, nose, throat surgeons. It was a recommendation of a school friend who lived in Cleveland, by the way, and had an office -- shared an office with an ear, nose, throat surgeon. So he was pretty anxious to get us out of town. But it was a very good move in this retrospect.

I said he passed his exam. He opened an office, found an apartment; opened an office on Valentine's Day 1939. He promptly applied for membership in the Medical Society, which was kind of a license to be -- license to legitimacy. He didn't hear anything for a couple

of weeks and then found out that there was an emergency meeting on a Friday night in which the Medical Society of Dayton passed a law an ex post facto, urgency, requiring citizenship for membership in the Medical Society. The vote was 51-50. Somebody did get upset about it without their knowledge.

The next day he got a call from a reporter of "The Dayton Herald." “Doctor, do you have time? Can I see you? I need to ask you a few questions.” He came over to his office and asked for his documents, where he studied, his medical credentials, and said "Thank you very much" and left. The next day "The Dayton Herald" had an editorial, "Freedom of Opportunity in the United States." The following Monday he had 11 new patients.

One of my favorite sayings is, “If you get a lemon, make lemonade.”

>> Bill Benson: Mm-hmm.

>> Frank Liebermann: And what was meant to be benign really established him.

By the way, in ‘41, he volunteered for the Army and was rejected because Dayton practically doubled in size during that time. They didn't want any doctors over 40 and were looking for younger men. There was a severe shortage of doctors. But he did volunteer twice a day giving physicals for the boards.

>> Bill Benson: And staying about your father, as you mentioned a little while ago, Frank, when he learned about what happened on Kristallnacht, he went to New York to try to see if he could help. He couldn't. But that did not stop his efforts to rescue people from Europe. Tell us about that.

>> Frank Liebermann: He became very active in what is known as the International -- a

Jewish resettlement organization. In the ‘60s, he received the international HIAS, international award of merit, together with President Truman for efforts in rehabilitating refugees from World War II.

>> Bill Benson: In fact, he personally was responsible for well over 100 refugees.

>> Frank Liebermann: 107, which he gave affidavits to.

>> Bill Benson: Personally.

>> Frank Liebermann: To guarantee that they would not be wards of the state.

>> Bill Benson: Personal affidavits for 107 people.

>> Frank Liebermann: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: Wow.

Frank, from what you know about what happened to the rest of your extended family, tell us what you know.

>> Frank Liebermann: My mother's -- two of my mother's brothers got visas for Shanghai and booked on an Italian boat. There were two countries which gave refuge: Shanghai, occupied by Japan, and the Dominican Republic. The rest of the world was pretty much closed. They were on the ship on the day that Italy declared war on England and France after the fall of the marginal line in 1940. The ship went back and we never heard anything from them again.

I did finally get closure. The Germans kept meticulous records; which, by the way, the Holocaust Museum was instrumental in digitalizing. We found that my grandparents were at sea until they were deported to Auschwitz. My mother's brothers were all in Auschwitz labor camps. And you saw records that they were treated for Typhus. When they came for

treatment, call it the medical office, they were gassed.

>> Bill Benson: And you personally have seen records.

>> Frank Liebermann: I've seen papers about it.

>> Bill Benson: You returned to Gliwice.

>> Frank Liebermann: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: What was that like for you?

>> Frank Liebermann: I've made peace with Germany. I remember one -- it's three generations. Particularly the people who come here, basically, do it because they can't right a wrong, but Germany is probably owned up to the Holocaust better than any other country in Europe, possibly with exception of Denmark.

So I decided -- I went hiking with my grandchildren last year. I had gone -- oh, about 12 years ago, Gliwice, the town created a memorial to the contribution of the Jewish community to the growth of the city. Because the Pols were trying to recreate their history. Coal was discovered in that area. It was owned really by the gentries during that time. That area was kind of a no-man's land partly belonging to Germany and to Poland. So the land of gentry didn't want to get their hands dirty and leased the land to entrepreneurs, a large number of whom were Jewish who started the coal mines and the industrial hub of Silesia. We were invited by the city of Gliwice for the opening of the memorial, which, by the way, had the ambassador -- the Israeli ambassador, the ambassador -- one of the ministers from Poland, and the German ambassador.

I feel I've got to be open about it. It just shows that when times are bad, civilization

becomes very fragile. This is what happens. That's what makes the Museum very timely even today. Because there are a lot of bad times.

So I went hiking with my grandchildren. There's a beautiful mountain range between Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and then we ended up in Krakow and Warsaw. And on the way, we stopped off in Gliwice, which is now a thriving university town. I know the house even though the street names are all different, street numbers are different. I couldn't go near it. Because of the fear the right of return. But I wanted to show my grandchildren, wanted to know where we came from. I had a wonderful time, a unique time, to spend with them.

>> Bill Benson: Thank you, Frank.

I'm going to turn back to Frank in a moment to close our program. Obviously we could have spent a lot more time not only hearing more details about what Frank's told us but also some of the adjustment of the family once they had moved to the United States.

We thank you for being here with us for what we were able to hear from Frank today. I remind you that we will have programs twice weekly through the middle of August. The Museum's website will provide information about *First Person* in 2015.

It's our tradition here at *First Person* that our *First Person* gets the last words. So I'm going to turn back to Frank for his last word. Two comments before I do so. One, because we didn't have a chance for question and answer with you, when Frank's done, he'll step off the stage. If anybody would like to ask him a question or shake his hand or take a photograph, whatever you would like to do, please, absolutely feel free to do that. And secondly when Frank is done, our photographer, Joel, over to my left is going to come on the stage. He'll take

a photograph of Frank with you as the backdrop. I'm going to signal to you to stand if you don't mind and if you would do that, we'll get this terrific photograph of Frank with you providing a great backdrop to that.

On that note, I'd like to turn back to Frank.

>> Frank Liebermann: I want to refer to my trip with my grandchildren. We were back in Gliwice. I kind of pinched myself that if it hadn't been for international events, I couldn't possibly imagine myself being part of that. With all that happened I feel wonderfully fortunate I've lived the American dream. I've got three children, five grandchildren, and all good things to be grateful for. I wish the same for all of you.

[Applause]

[The *First Person* event ended at 12:01 p.m.]