

UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM
FIRST PERSON SERIES
FIRST PERSON: JACQUES FEIN
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>> Bill Benson: Good morning, and welcome to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. My name is Bill Benson. I am the host of the museum's public program, *First Person*. Thank you for joining us. We are in our 17th year of the *First Person* program. Our First Person today is Mr. Jacques Fein, whom we shall meet shortly.

This 2016 season of *First Person* is made possible by the generosity of the Louis Franklin Smith Foundation, with additional funding from the Arlene and Daniel Fisher Foundation. We are grateful for their sponsorship.

First Person is a series of conversations with survivors of the Holocaust who share with us their firsthand accounts of their experience during the Holocaust. Each of our *First Person* guests serves as a volunteer here at this museum. Our 2016 *First Person* program closes with today's program. The museum's website, listed on the back of your program, will provide information about our 2017 *First Person* program. The address is www.ushmm.org.

Anyone interested in keeping in touch with the museum and its programs can complete the Stay Connected card in your program or speak with a museum representative at the back of the theater. In doing so, you will receive an electronic copy of Jacques Fein's biography so that you can remember and share his testimony after you leave here today.

Jacques will share his "First Person" account of his experience during the Holocaust and as a survivor for about 45 minutes. If time allows, at the end, we will have an opportunity for you to ask Jacques questions.

The life stories of Holocaust survivors transcend the decades. What you are about to hear from Jacques 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 taken in 1941 of Jacques and his younger sister, Annette.

Jacques was born Jacques Karpik in Paris, France, on October 10, 1938. His parents, Szmul and Rozja, were born in Poland in the 1910s but relocated to France. The arrow on this map of France points to Paris.

Germany invaded France in May 1940. The next month, in June, France signed an armistice with Germany. Under the terms of the armistice, northern France, including Paris, came under German rule and Southern France remained unoccupied. Here we have a group portrait of the Karpik family with an aunt, uncle, and cousins taken shortly after the German invasion of France. Jacques' parents are on the left, and he is seated at the bottom. After Germany invaded France Jacques and his sister were hidden with the Bocahut, a Catholic family, just outside of Paris.

Here we see a portrait of the Bocahut family at a wedding. Jacques and his sister, who were in hiding with the family at the time, are circled. Jacques stands in front of Suzanne Bocahut and Annette is in front of Marcel Bocahut.

While Jacques and Annette were in hiding, their parents were deported to transit camps and then to Auschwitz. Pictured here are prisoners in the Pithiviers transit camp. Jacques' father, Szmul, is the man smoking the cigarette, on your right.

After the war, Jacques and Annette were placed in orphanages; then later adopted by an American couple, Harry and Rose Fein. We close with Jacques' passport photo from 1948.

After their adoption by the Feins in 1948, Jacques and Annette began their new life in the United States, growing up in New Jersey. Jacques attended Clark University in Massachusetts, majoring in math. After attending graduate school at NYU he began his career as a computer scientist in the aerospace industry, starting with Martin Marietta in Baltimore. He retired in the same field after 38 years with Computer Sciences Corporation or CSC.

Jacques has a daughter, Rachel, and a son, Matthew, from his first marriage. In 1986 he married his second wife, Judee Iliff, whose daughter Laura and her husband David have opened a very successful ice-cream parlor in Baltimore, the Charmery. Jacques and Judee have four grandchildren: Sam, Zachary, Adrienne, and Margalit, or Maggie, who celebrated her 2nd birthday in June.

Judee and Jacques live in Elkridge, Maryland, about mid-way between Washington, D.C. and Baltimore. Judee is here today with Jacques, as is his daughter Rachel and her friend Melissa Madison. And we have them here in the front row.

In 1983, Jacques attended the American Gathering of Jewish Survivors of the Holocaust where he found other survivors who were children during the war. After that, he and others formed the organization, Washington/Baltimore Survivors of the Holocaust - Last Generation. Jacques is a former president of the Jewish Federation of Howard County, Maryland, and is very active as a volunteer in his community. In 2011 Jacques was recognized as the Howard County Volunteer of the Year. The Howard County Volunteer of the Year coordinator said about Jacques, "He was affected at such a young age. He took a terrible thing and has done greatness with it."

Jacques became co-president of OSE-USA in 2014, an organization we will learn more about later.

On June 6, 2014, Jacques and Judee attended the 70th Anniversary of D-Day Commemoration at the WW II Memorial here in Washington, D.C., where he was able, as Jacques said, "to thank a few Normandy veterans for saving not only my life but the lives of all the world!"

Jacques volunteers here at this museum where you will find him at the Donors Desk on Thursdays. Jacques volunteers because years ago he was saved by strangers and with the help of the Jewish Community. Now, he says, "it is payback time."

With that, I would like you to join me in welcoming our First Person, Jacques Fein.

>> [Applause]

>> Bill Benson: Jacques, thank you so much for joining us today and your willingness to be our First Person. You have a great deal to share with us, so we'll get started right away. For our last program of the year, we have a large and great audience. Here we go.

Jacques, World War II, of course, began in September 1939, with Germany's invasion of Poland. The following May Germany invaded France. You were just 1 1/2-year-old at that time. Before we turn to the war years and the Holocaust, tell us what you can about your parents and what their life may have been like in pre-war Paris knowing that you were far too young to have your own memories. You've had to piece things together and learn what you can.

>> Jacques Fein: When the war started, I was only 11 months old. So as far as my memories, they are my parents'. I have virtually nothing. And I don't even remember what they looked like, until many years later when I received those pictures.

What I understand from my cousin, when they emigrated to Paris, my father was a tailor, my mother was a housekeeper/wife. And that's how they made their living, with many other Jewish immigrants from eastern Poland. And that was basically their life.

I got this information also from my cousin, who survived the war. She's five years older than I am. She did write me a letter in 1984, talking about my parents. And that's what she told me. So I have to believe her. And I do believe that, also, because from reading the history of the foreign Jews who came to Paris, that was basically their life, knitters, tailors, housekeepers trying to make a living.

>> Bill Benson: Have you learned what life may have been like in general for Jews who immigrated from Poland to Paris at that time?

>> Jacques Fein: Probably they had to assimilate, which was not very easy because it was the mid-'30s and already things were happening where they came from, anti-Semitic Poland. Things were happening, so people knew, you know, had a sense of what was going to happen.

>> Bill Benson: Hitler is coming to power. They know that.

>> Jacques Fein: In the world sometimes you need money to get out.

>> Bill Benson: And you've never been able to learn why they went to Paris?

>> Jacques Fein: Sort of. Again, this is second-hand from my cousin. But, A, to escape anti-Semitism, again, pretty common from history books, and for better economic conditions. And I believe also there were other family members who emigrated to Paris like my cousin and her family.

>> Bill Benson: Have you been able to learn how large your extended family may have been?

>> Jacques Fein: That's a very good question. The answer is, I have no idea. So that's one of the issues of our lives. We don't know who the family was and how many we had.

>> Bill Benson: And I also know that most of the details about your parents being rounded up, sent to camps, and then later deported to Auschwitz are unknown to you. You believe your father was taken in 1941, possibly in May, and your mother in July of 1942. Have you been able to learn anything about the circumstances concerning your father's -- your father being taken by the Germans and about where he was sent?

>> Jacques Fein: That's a good question. So how do I know they were taken on those dates? There's a famous hunter of Nazis in Europe who documented all the Jews who left, in this case who were deported, from Paris, France -- sorry, from France. And I was able to get that book. And I knew my last name. And with the help of some other people, my father was taken on convoy three in 1941 and my mother was in convoy 51 in July -- sometime in 1943. So it was documented. Plus I also have in here, which is not shown, documents from the French police that was done in the late '40s showing the dates where my father was born, when he was taken, and the same with my mother. So it's been documented. But, again, I do not know anything of what happened.

>> Bill Benson: Right. What do you know about Pithiviers, its camp that your father was sent to? What have you learned about that place?

>> Jacques Fein: It was basically a transit camp. People thought it was a place -- some of the Jews thought this was a place where they had to be sent, temporary place. But eventually they learned situation that they were sent by train to Paris and then by train to Auschwitz. So word got around.

>> Bill Benson: Was it close to Paris, Pithiviers?

>> Jacques Fein: It was south of Paris. And they went -- my mother -- my father was in Pithiviers. My mother was eventually sent to a camp north of Paris. It was a terrible transit camp.

>> Bill Benson: Drancy was. And transit camp meaning a holding place.

>> Jacques Fein: It wasn't a concentration camp per se but it was not a place you would want to live.

>> Bill Benson: Right. How were you able to get the photograph of your father at Pithiviers?

>> Jacques Fein: In 1984, I found out -- actually, 1983 I found out that I did have cousins alive. So from 1948 to 45 years later I found out.

>> Bill Benson: That was the first you learned about it?

>> Jacques Fein: That I had some cousins living. I found out from my sister, two years younger but had been living in Israel since 1962. And after that convention in 1983, I wrote to my sister to see if she knows anything. And then she told me. I eventually wrote to my cousins.

When I visited them, I believe I got that picture from them. It was quite amazing.

>> Bill Benson: It is amazing that you have that photograph, really amazing.

>> Jacques Fein: Those photographs that you saw here, I did not get those until 1984. So from 1948 -- 36 years later I found out that these were my family.

>> Bill Benson: So the very first photographs of your parents were that in 1983. Wow.

>> Jacques Fein: Correct.

>> Bill Benson: Wow. Let that sink in.

>> Jacques Fein: The other thing I don't know is where it was taken, what conditions.

>> Bill Benson: Right.

>> Jacques Fein: None of that.

>> Bill Benson: Jacques, from what you know, sometime after your father was taken and before your mother was also caught in a German roundup your mother arranged for you and your sister to be hidden with a French Catholic family. What have you been able to learn, if anything, about the roundup that took your mother?

>> Jacques Fein: July 16, I think 1942, there was a major roundup of Jews in Paris. So at first -- the initial efforts was to take foreign Jews, foreign male Jews.

>> Bill Benson: So your family's Polish.

>> Jacques Fein: So my father and my uncle, 1941. Then things got tighter and stricter. And the people were following orders. They had to sign up with the police. They had to show identification. People were following the law. They were foreigners in a strange land. They knew they were in danger. And then the French police, the French government and the German government, tightened the noose on the Jews and had a major roundup in July 1942. Now, there were other roundups before that at that time but that was a major one. My mother got somewhat caught in that process. I understand that -- when Judee and I visited that town many years ago, in 1986, I think, she didn't wear her yellow star and she -- somehow she got caught and after that she was sent to Drancy and then eventually to Auschwitz.

>> Bill Benson: I think you have reason -- you have had reason to believe she may have been grabbed on the Paris subway system.

>> Jacques Fein: That's what I was told. Again, when I visited the family that hid me in 1986. But, again, 40 years after the war ended. And they were teenagers at that time.

>> Bill Benson: As you mentioned, there were many roundups but that one, the Velodrome --

>> Jacques Fein: One of the reasons it was infamous, the men had been taken, living in horrible, horrible conditions, and then sent to convoys by train.

>> Bill Benson: Those two days, I believe, something like 13,000 Jews were taken.

>> Jacques Fein: I'm not quite sure of the number.

>> Bill Benson: A huge number. And weren't they kept in the Velodrome, a bicycle racing stadium? A small one?

>> Jacques Fein: Right. And what happened, although the Germans were involved, the key instigators of World War II and the anti-Semitism, the French, the French police, were more than willing to get as many Jewish people as possible.

>> Bill Benson: They did most of the rounding up at that point. In fact, that particular roundup, I think, has been the subject of books and movies. There's one movie, "Sarah's Key," which is about that roundup.

>> Jacques Fein: One more thing I just remembered about the police. Judee and I visited the museum in Paris, France. It's unbelievable how many records they have. And one of them, we found in one of the records, the French police wrote [Speaking Non-English Language]. At the street where I was living. And that meant in English, get the children. So that was my sister and I, obviously.

>> Bill Benson: As you were telling us, your mother went to Drancy, a particularly horrible transit camp. Have you visited Drancy?

>> Jacques Fein: I did but it was very, very quick. We went many years ago. Then we went last year. We didn't have the time to revisit it. But it was pretty different. They had a museum and all of that. But I had enough different information. We got a sense.

>> Bill Benson: And as you told us, you learned that the convoys that took your mom and father to Auschwitz. Were you able to learn how long they were at Auschwitz, whether they were killed immediately or not?

>> Jacques Fein: Well, each convoy roughly took about 1,000 Jews, maybe others. I'm pretty sure they were killed pretty much immediately. Because in order to survive, you had to be strong enough to work and help out. Not help but be forced --

>> Bill Benson: Slave labor.

>> Jacques Fein: Yeah, slave labor, for the German war machine. So I'm pretty sure they were pretty quick.

>> Bill Benson: So, Jacques, of course, your mother was able to put you in hiding. You were hidden with a French family, the Bocahuts, with whom you would remain until the end of the war in France. Tell us what you can about the Bocahuts and what your life was like with them, again, knowing that you learned a lot later in life.

>> Jacques Fein: Ok. Again, I want to emphasize one word. I was very young. How much do you remember when you're 2, 3, 4, 5 years old? Plus I was with strangers. Not with family. We had to be very quiet.

The process of being hidden, as you mentioned, there was a French organization called OSE, Oeuvres de Secours aux Enfants, which means the organization to save children.

Let me get a drink.

>> Bill Benson: And that organization, OSE, was created specifically for that purpose?

>> Jacques Fein: Yes and no. During the war, yes. But that organization was initially founded in Russia in the 1920s. And it was to help poor Jewish people at that time. They moved out to Berlin, actually, and then eventually to France. But the mission during the war was to save as many kids as possible.

So we believe that the OSE, with the help of my mother, put us in hiding. And also one of the process of finding kids and telling families you're in danger, the OSE social workers would go out with leaflets and knock on doors and tell people what's happening, that if you want to try to save your kids --

>> Bill Benson: Let us take them.

>> Jacques Fein: Exactly. So I was put in a safe place. Hidden outside of Paris where the airport is right now. So that's how much I know. Again, I was put in hiding in roughly 1941. I was 3 years old. And my sister was 1.

>> Bill Benson: What would you know, particularly knowing that you've met some of the Bocahut family and visited with them -- tell us about the Bocahuts. What kind of a family were they?

>> Jacques Fein: Well, I'll tell you what. I don't remember being scared, per se, or being hungry or being that hurt. I remember living with them but I don't remember my day-to-day life.

>> Bill Benson: Of course not.

>> Jacques Fein: It was on a farm. It was with other kids.

>> Bill Benson: So you were on a farm. You were outside of Paris?

>> Jacques Fein: We didn't see much of war, any of war, except twice. Maybe three times. One time -- they had to be very careful. Like Anne Frank was hidden in an apartment building in Amsterdam and her neighbors betrayed her. So one day the parents of the family put my sister and I in a ditch with a blanket over us. To this day I still can remember see maybe 150 yards away soldiers with guns and dogs. Whether they were French soldiers or German soldiers, they were looking for resistance fighters, escaped Jews and others. So they had to be very careful. And I'm sure there were other times they had to be careful also.

>> Bill Benson: That's a memory you have.

>> Jacques Fein: I still have. As Judee knows, I don't like German Shepherds.

>> [Laughter]

>> Bill Benson: Right. One of the things you shared with me, Jacques, is that even though you don't have a lot of specific memories because of your age, you remember this atmosphere of having to keep quiet.

>> Jacques Fein: Right. Exactly. I just had that sense. As I told, Francis was in the similar situation in Europe. We have snippets of what happened to us. But we were not teenagers or older where we could remember life from day it to day. But we have bits and pieces.

That was one time. Another time I remember I was taken to a hospital. I had an earache. I got the details from the family I visited a number of years ago, back in 1986 I think. It turned out the father took me out of the hospital. When we visited the family back in 1986 -- '84, my mistake. We found out that the Germans had invaded that hospital. And had I been there, I don't think I would be here today.

>> Bill Benson: So just to make sure we understand, you had been taken to the hospital but the father came and pulled you out of there.

>> Jacques Fein: It doesn't make sense.

>> Bill Benson: Then they raided the hospital.

>> Jacques Fein: Those were two tough moments. But the best moment that I remember was June 6, 1944, France --

>> Bill Benson: Before we come to that, a couple more questions before we come to D-Day.

You've also come to understand that your mother may have been able to visit you.

>> Jacques Fein: That's what I was told. But I don't --

>> Bill Benson: So sometime between when you went into hiding with the Bocahuts and before she was taken and then sent to Auschwitz.

>> Jacques Fein: They told me that. I just don't --

>> Bill Benson: You don't know.

>> Jacques Fein: There was a sense that, yes -- for example, they told me one day -- I used to be somewhat talkative but then I became very sad over time. And that's when I had been told that my mother had been taken and I would not see her again. But the details I just can't -- vaguely remember that.

>> Bill Benson: And presumably for the Bocahuts, hiding you, they were at risk for doing that.

>> Jacques Fein: Yup. Yup. Mm-hmm.

>> Bill Benson: So they were taking a risk by doing that. Do you know, from what you learned from the family, do you know how they explained the presence of you and your sister in their home?

>> Jacques Fein: Very carefully.

>> Bill Benson: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

>> Jacques Fein: They had other kids. Also, they were in the outskirts. They were definitely against the war and they were able to do that.

>> Bill Benson: And as you said, because they were out in the outskirts, they didn't have the gendarme around.

>> Jacques Fein: Not like Paris, ground zero.

>> Bill Benson: Right. As part of hiding you, the clandestine nature of that, you were baptized as a Catholic by the Bocahuts.

>> Jacques Fein: Right. That was part of it.

>> Bill Benson: So they must have explained that to folks in case anybody raised that.

When you visited with the Bocahuts, 1983 or 1986 when you visited with them for first time, what else were you able to learn from them about those circumstances that you and Annette, your sister, were living under with them?

>> Jacques Fein: Well, what I learned is that once the war ended, ok, we were separated from them completely. And I learned from their children, who were like teenagers at that time, maybe 12, 14, 16, they were parts of the family but they were not in charge. So that's sort of what I learned. But after the war, I think they may have hidden a few other kids. Everybody was left.

>> Bill Benson: You think they may have hidden other Jewish children? And they had their own kids.

>> Jacques Fein: And the OSE, the organization that was in charge, monitored where all the kids were. There was also money involved. There was also religion involved. Because after the war they wanted to keep us and, you know, convert us to being Catholic. And that was kind of an issue at that time.

>> Bill Benson: Right. So you started to tell us, a few minutes ago, about an event in 1944. Is this when you remember the allies coming through?

>> Jacques Fein: Yeah. Well, June 6, 1944, was D-Day. But Paris was liberated August 24, I think, 1945. So during that time -- I'm pretty sure it was during the summer. The townspeople all of a sudden -- went to the main highway. We would see tanks coming and soldiers coming. They could have been Americans or British or Canadians. We had no idea which one. But it was like July 4. People were shouting and being happy.

>> Bill Benson: And you remember that?

>> Jacques Fein: Oh, yeah. Very much. And the soldiers were throwing out candy to the kids, Hershey bars. And everybody was pretty happy. At that time I didn't know what it was. But obviously I learned it was the liberation of France.

>> Bill Benson: So with the liberation of France and Paris in late August 1944, of course the war would not end until May 1945 elsewhere. But following the end of the war, the organization that had saved you, the OSE, they removed you from the home of the Bocahuts, took you to an orphanage, and then later moved you another where you and Annette remained until 1945. What do you know about the circumstances in which OSE came to take you from the Bocahuts?

>> Jacques Fein: The mission during the war was to save as many kids as possible and put them in hiding. But the mission after the war was the reverse, take the kids out of hiding and try to reunite them with their parents or other familiar I members. So I don't know how they knew this but they knew my parents had not survived the war. So they were connect to the Polish government and other organizations.

One uncle, that you saw there, he survived Auschwitz and he could not take care of his two kids, my sister and I. I had another uncle, not quite sure what happened there. So the family decided, my family, to send us to an orphanage, which we did on the coasts of Brittany and France.

And then in 1947, we went to another one, another orphanage. But the main thing about the orphanage, those were, considering everything else, they were the best time of our lives at that time because we came out hiding, we played with other kids, learned about our religion. We were fed. We went to school. Except for the issue that some of us were orphans, but we were all in the same situation.

>> Bill Benson: Before you say more about that for us, Jacques, tell us something. Do you have any recollection of what it was like to leave the Bocahut household? You had been there for three-plus years.

>> Jacques Fein: I just followed orders at that time. No recollection of how, what happened exactly.

>> Bill Benson: So from there when OSE got you and Annette, you were still together, obviously. So the first orphanage was on the coast, as you said, Normandy or Brittany?

>> Jacques Fein: Brittany.

>> Bill Benson: What kind of place was that? Do you know?

>> Jacques Fein: Let me tell you first about the family in OSE. The issue was they wanted to keep us, I understand.

>> Bill Benson: They did want to.

>> Jacques Fein: Yeah. But there was money involved. The OSE people, also, in some cases sent money to the families that were hiding us. But the OSE said we couldn't -- they could not keep us. We had to take them back.

So as far as the orphanage on the coast, we went swimming. We went to school. It was very close to the ocean. It was pretty nice.

>> Bill Benson: And then from there?

>> Jacques Fein: We went to another one outside of Paris called Taverny. [Indiscernible] was sent there after he was liberated from Buchenwald. I wasn't there. But -- I got in 1947. Again, it was a place for all the kids, basically in the same situation.

>> Bill Benson: You described Taverny to me as sort of a chateau.

>> Jacques Fein: Many of the orphanages were homes or chateaus.

>> Bill Benson: And there you were with all of these other kids who had been in hiding up till that point. So as you said that, for you, was a happy place.

>> Jacques Fein: Right.

>> Bill Benson: Was that a place where they began to try to instill in you a sense of your religious heritage?

>> Jacques Fein: Right. That, schooling, French schooling.

>> Bill Benson: Education.

>> Jacques Fein: Education. Being with other kids. Reclaiming our lives as children, all of that.

>> Bill Benson: Were these -- like Taverny and the place you were at in Brittany, were they actually owned by OSE or do you know the arrangements?

>> Jacques Fein: They had made arrangements. The OSE got money from the Jewish community in the United States and some other Jewish -- other money from the French government but they had a number of homes. And during the war itself they had saved -- they had sent some kids from Austria and Germany to homes in south France. So it was quite complicated.

>> Bill Benson: Of course, at this time, this is postwar France. France is shattered by the war.

>> Jacques Fein: Oh, yeah.

>> Bill Benson: Do you have any sense of what conditions were like? No?

>> Jacques Fein: No. No. No. No.

>> Bill Benson: You were sort of in this protected happy place.

>> Jacques Fein: We were trying to relearn about our lives as kids. I'm sure we learned something about the bigger events but --

>> Bill Benson: But in terms of food shortages, you don't have a recollection of that?

>> Jacques Fein: Not at all. Believe me, whatever we did, we were much happier than the previous years.

>> Bill Benson: Jacques, do you know when you realized or understood that you weren't going to see your parents again?

>> Jacques Fein: That's a good question but I do not remember that as an adult. We were with other kids in the same situation. So it was almost like, in a sense, normal. Nothing unusual. We were not the only ones.

>> Bill Benson: Right. Right.

Do you know how many kids were there with you?

>> Jacques Fein: In Taverny, I think about 80. I have it listed somewhere.

>> Bill Benson: Ok. At Taverny in 1948, you were visited by an American couple, the Feins, who had later adopted you and Annette and brought you to the United States. Tell us what you can about meeting the Feins and then what happened after that and about moving to the United States.

>> Jacques Fein: Ok, well, they came to that orphanage in Taverny. And why they wound up in Taverny, unfortunately I'll never know because they did pass away about 10, 15 years ago and I never asked them. But they were very well connected to the Jewish community of New York-New Jersey. But they did wind up in Taverny, saw my sister and I. They liked my sister. They liked me. We came as a package.

>> [Laughter]

>> Jacques Fein: Actually, one time they came to Paris, so we visited them in Paris also. So we saw a bit of them.

>> Bill Benson: So it wasn't they came the very first time and you left with them of. It was a process.

>> Jacques Fein: It was a process. Probably six months.

>> Bill Benson: Something like that.

>> Jacques Fein: And then eventually one day we were told we were going to the United States. And followed orders. At that time I was a bit older. You just don't have too much control of your life, especially from my situation.

>> Bill Benson: Did you come to the United States with them?

>> Jacques Fein: No. My sister and I had a chaperon with a few other kids. We went from Paris to Marseille. October 8 we left France and got to the United States October 23.

>> Bill Benson: With a chaperon. Was the chaperon from OSE, do you know?

>> Jacques Fein: Could have been. She lived in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

>> Bill Benson: Do you remember your ship ride?

>> Jacques Fein: Yeah. It was kind of neat. I learned, being with the other kids, to play chess.

>> Bill Benson: On a ship?

>> Jacques Fein: Yeah. There were a lot of other people. But a key date was October 8, when we arrived in the morning. Lots of people were moving towards one side of the boat. It was foggy but they were aware there was a Statue of Liberty that they were seeing.

>> Bill Benson: So you're 10 I think. Right?

>> Jacques Fein: Actually I was 10 years old on the trip.

>> Bill Benson: Turned 10 on the trip. So you arrive in the U.S. What was that like for you and what you know about for your sister, too? What kind of adjustments did you have to make given all that you had been through the first 10 years?

>> Jacques Fein: Well, first of all, we knew, you know, we were coming to the United States. But among other things we had to do, we had to learn a new language, a new family, a new culture. Schooling was an issue. I started at home, I was 10 years old. The family that adopted me was well to do. I went to a private school but I started at 10 years old, in the first grade.

>> Bill Benson: So 10 years old, in the first grade.

>> Jacques Fein: But I made up the grades later.

>> Bill Benson: Very quickly. And became a computer scientist. Absolutely. I don't know what you remember from that but that had to be a tough adjustment.

>> Jacques Fein: Yeah, it was. Because with the kids outside I spoke only French and trying to assimilate with everybody else.

>> Bill Benson: And Annette went through a very similar experience.

>> Jacques Fein: And she was two years younger. So her memory is even less than mine of that time.

>> Bill Benson: And this is in New Jersey. And after that you stayed with, of course, with the Feins, your new family.

You've been back to France several times to visit the Bocahut family. What was it like for you after that gap of more than three decades to find them and get to know them?

>> Jacques Fein: It was quite difficult. From 1945 I was completely separated from them. I was able to find at dress from the OSE offices in Paris, France. Fortunately they were still at that address, with my cousins and friends. It was shocking. I don't know if we hugged, but we did speak to each other and they were excited. But it was definitely strange.

>> Bill Benson: Did they still live in the farmhouse at that time?

>> Jacques Fein: No. It became more like a suburb.

>> Bill Benson: You've learned a lot about your time in Taverny from reading OSE documents. In fact, I think you read a dossier on you. What did you learn in those documents that are very well detailed?

>> Jacques Fein: Well, I learned also you can really learn about your life if you kind of dig. This is what I used. It took me -- most people I'm sure have albums of their lives over the first 10 years. This took me 30, 40 years to put this together. I treasure it. It's like my Bible, so to speak. I learned bits and pieces. But what's impossible to learn is exactly how things happened. You know, how were my parents taken, exactly? When did this happen? When were these photographs taken or anything?

>> Bill Benson: What other kinds of information have you learned from your dossier, what you saw in the OSE documents? I think there were letters that were written.

>> Jacques Fein: It's not only me -- ok, this is about me. But they saved the lives of many kids. Many other kids.

>> Bill Benson: But you had access to yours.

>> Jacques Fein: Right. And other people can do the same thing, even to this day.

I got a letter from France, actually, a few days ago, an e-mail. What happened, there's an OSE also in the United States. A number of other people were saved by the OSE and we formed an organization called OSE/USA. It's like a network. We get together, talk to each other, and we connect. We raised some money and sent to France. Sometimes we try to get information about us or other people.

Two days ago one of the persons from the OSE sent us an e-mail, wanted to know the name where this person called Leon Schwartz, do we know where he is. It so happens we have somebody in our database with a similar name, so I sent it to France. I'm not quite sure what's going to happen. That was only yesterday.

>> Bill Benson: But it may be the Leon Schwartz they're looking for.

>> Jacques Fein: Also, in terms of names spelling was an issue. My last name originally was Karpik. But in some other places it's k-a-r-p-i-c. It's not a big deal but sometimes when you're trying to find information, you have to be aware that it's not 100% correct. In those days there was no computers. There were no computers, internet and all of that good stuff.

>> Bill Benson: And speaking of the others that were with you at Taverny, or possibly, tell us about some of these.

>> Jacques Fein: Well, when I came to the United States in 1948, the kids from Taverny sent me some letters. They wanted to know how I was doing. They missed us. So fast forward to 1983, the American gathering of Jewish Holocaust survivors in Washington. What they did, among other things, they broke up the people by table -- by country. So I went to the French table.

>> Bill Benson: This was your first gathering.

>> Jacques Fein: Yes. I was at the Washington Convention Center. It was a pretty large gathering. Actually, there was another one in 1981 in Jerusalem. That was first one. But I never went there. So 1983 I went with a friend of mine from Columbia, Maryland, very close to Baltimore. We went to the French table.

>> Bill Benson: There were tables of the different countries.

>> Jacques Fein: These conventions are usually set up that way.

>> Bill Benson: Ok.

>> Jacques Fein: Somebody, you know, you have names. This lady says what's your name? She said Felice. I said, "That's interesting. I have a letter from somebody named Felice." I went back to my house, maybe an hour away, came back, showed her the letter and she screamed because that was her.

>> Bill Benson: That was the letter she wrote to you.

>> Jacques Fein: Yeah, she had written to me. So we were in the same orphanage in Taverny. It so happened when she came to the United States, I lived in Newark, New Jersey and then Union. And she lived in I think -- I forgot, Livingston or Tea Neck, in the same general section of New Jersey. We kept up our friendship.

>> Bill Benson: And you still have those letters that the kids at Taverny wrote you when you left?

>> Jacques Fein: Yeah.

>> Bill Benson: Jacques, what was it like for you to go to your first gathering of other children survivors? What was that like for you?

>> Jacques Fein: The main thing was -- ok, in terms of survivors, I guarantee, most people on the street, Holocaust survivors, most of them will say concentration camps or ghettos. But there was another class of survivors, like us, who were children during the war who were hidden, who ran. They were just in tough situations as those who were in concentration camps.

For example, one of my friends survived in Poland. She had to survive by crossing a river except she didn't know how to swim. She was maybe 8, I don't know, 7, 8 years old. For her to do that, I guarantee you it was pretty scary for her.

>> Bill Benson: Right.

>> Jacques Fein: And others were in similar situations. So the main thing was to see other people who were in the similar situation, who were born in the '30s, never went to concentration -- few went to

concentration camps. And from that we formed a group and a few more groups. And we have an association of child survivors of the Holocaust, mainly kids, people who were children during the war. Very few -- some were in concentration camps but they were able to survive.

>> Bill Benson: And that led you to found another organization here locally.

Jacques, your sister, Annette, how's her life been since she came to the U.S.?

>> Jacques Fein: Well, good question. From my point of view and our family point of view, she's got a lonely life but she enjoy what's she's doing. She's never married. She has some friends but we never have a good sense that she has a good network to be with. She's been living in Israel since 1962. That's what she wants to do.

>> Bill Benson: If I remember correctly, you had her come to the United States and attend her first meeting of other child survivors. Is that right?

>> Jacques Fein: Yeah, I think 1983, 1990 or something.

>> Bill Benson: Right.

>> Jacques Fein: Again, being Jewish in the United States is quite different than being Jewish in Israel. As you know, there are quite a number of Jews who live in Israel.

>> [Laughter]

>> Jacques Fein: A different environment.

>> Bill Benson: Right. Right. But she came --

>> Jacques Fein: Once she came to this convention, she kind of finally realized that, you know, about her past, opened up.

>> Bill Benson: You mentioned -- I think you mentioned two uncle that survived Auschwitz. Do you know -- are you aware of any other members of your extended family who survived?

>> Jacques Fein: The answer is yes, I know others but who they are I have no idea. No idea.

>> Bill Benson: Ok. We have time to turn to our audience for some questions. Shall we do that?

>> Jacques Fein: Sure.

>> Bill Benson: Ok. It's our tradition at *First Person* that our First Person has the last word. So when we close our program, I'm going to turn back to Jacques to close it but before we do that, we'd like to see if you have any questions you would like to ask Jacques. We have microphones on either side of the aisle, Gabriel or I think Molly, someone, on this side. Please wait until you have the microphone. Try to make your question as brief as you can. I'll repeat it just to make sure we all, and particularly Jacques, hears it. And then he'll answer your question.

Let's see if any of you have any questions you would like to ask Jacques. We have some time for this. We have a brave soul right up front here. Gabriel, thank you. Ok.

>> Do you continue to practice Judaism? Is that how you raised your children?

>> Bill Benson: Do you continue to practice Judaism and is that how you raised your family?

>> Jacques Fein: One opening statement first. I've done this *First Person* five or six years. I'm kind of used to doing this. As far as being Jewish and Judaism, again, when I was in an orphanage I finally learned that I was Jewish and practiced that. My children, one of them is here, Rachel, the answer is basically yes. They are Jewish but, you know, at different levels. There's been no problems being Jewish.

>> Bill Benson: Thank you.

Another question anywhere? Anybody have a question? There we go. The gentleman back here.

>> Thank you very much for this testimony. I wanted to ask why, in your view, you think anti-Semitism is still existing today and what is the best way to fight it, in your view?

>> Bill Benson: Do you think anti-Semitism -- if I'm getting this right -- exists today and what's your thought about the best way to fight it?

>> Jacques Fein: That's a very tough question. The answer, it does exist today in different forms. As far as -- I never thought of how to fight it. But the main thing would be to tell the truth as much as possible. You know, talking about what's happening instead of hiding it.

>> Bill Benson: Doing exactly what you're doing here. Absolutely.

Thank you.

>> Jacques Fein: It's a very complicated process.

>> Bill Benson: There's a young fellow here with a hand up over here.

>> How did you feel while you were in the ditch?

>> Bill Benson: How did feel when you were in the ditch?

>> Jacques Fein: Good question but that's one of the few things I really remember, that I really felt, what's going on. I just knew there was something wrong. And then when I saw the soldiers with guns and dogs, it did not feel very good. And as I said before, to this day I still don't like --

>> Bill Benson: Don't like German Shepherds.

Ok. Thank you for that question.

>> Jacques Fein: Good question.

>> Bill Benson: And we have one right here. Thank you.

>> Jacques Fein: Let me add one thing. The reason I remember this, obviously it made a big impact on me.

>> Bill Benson: And one that has stuck with you for all of these years.

>> Jacques Fein: Oh, yeah.

>> Bill Benson: Absolutely.

>> The OSE organization, you mentioned a book about that. What was that? I'd like to read it.

>> Bill Benson: You mentioned a book about OSE.

>> Jacques Fein: Ok. Did I mention the book? There was a Nazi hunter in France called Serge Klarsfeld. He listed all the Jews that were deported. So it's not a book, per se, but it's a book about the Jews of France who were deported. And OSE is mentioned. The French name Oeuvres de Secours aux Enfants. If you look up the website, you'll find some information.

>> Bill Benson: OSE saved many, many children.

>> Jacques Fein: Thousands. But unfortunately many more thousands were never saved. Like in France it's -- in the Holocaust it's estimated that 1.5 million kids were not saved. And in France, about 80,000 were deported.

>> Bill Benson: From France. Has there been a book written about OSE, do you know?

>> Jacques Fein: Yes. And I can't give you the exact name. Actually, I'm reading a book called "The Village of Secrets." It's about Vichy France and how there was a village section of France where there were a number of children saved, the inhabitants were pacifists.

>> Bill Benson: In this particular village.

>> Jacques Fein: And it mentions OSE all over the place.

>> Bill Benson: "Village of Secrets." Ok. All right.

A young lady right here. Right up here. Yeah.

>> When you were learning about your family, did you have to interview anybody that was, like, in like you were in it kind of a little bit or the camps?

>> Bill Benson: When you were learning about your family, did you interview people to learn about your family? Am I getting that right?

>> Yeah.

>> Jacques Fein: The only -- I did find out that I had a cousin who was still living, in 1984. So I've been writing to her. The war ended in 1945. So 37 years later, 38 years later, I found out that I had a family member who was still living. So I was able to write to her. And she speaks English and her husband speaks English also. So that's how I got some of the information.

And actually, I got here a letter from her from 1984 telling me about my parents and some of the history. So the answer is, yes, I was able to do that with a member of my family.

>> Bill Benson: Another question right there.

>> Jacques Fein: One more thing. I did find out more also from -- remember the OSE organization. I found out from them how they operated during the war. For example, as far as saving kids, they sent out leaflets and they went around to the Jewish homes to say, hey, you're in trouble; if you want to save your kids, you may keep them in hiding.

>> Bill Benson: Imagine for all of us in this room trying to imagine when your mom made that decision, that I've got to do this now, I've got to put my daughter and my son into hiding. I can't imagine how profound that was to make that decision and how courageous it was.

>> Jacques Fein: Yup.

>> Bill Benson: Yes, sir?

>> I heard that you have grandchildren.

>> Jacques Fein: Yes.

>> What do you want your grandchildren to learn from your experience? What do you want them to remember?

>> Bill Benson: Good question. What do you want your grandchildren to learn from what you went through?

>> Jacques Fein: Well, I think I taught them, and Rachel and Judee will verify, that I went through the Holocaust and I was able to survive because of the help of strangers. And I think they understood that.

As a matter of fact, my oldest granddaughter told me one day, "You were adopted. I'm adopted." And she was also adopted: She reminds me that I was adopted. And my oldest grandson, Samuel, well, that was the name -- in English, the name of my birth father was Samuel. So they kind of know. And hopefully next year they will come here to *First Person*.

>> Bill Benson: I hope so. We'll look forward to having them here.

We have a couple more. Young lady in yellow.

>> When you were on the farm, did you get any pastries or treats?

>> [Laughter]

>> Bill Benson: When you were on the farm, do you know if you got any pastries or treats of any kind?

>> Jacques Fein: Well, I was too young to remember but -- I don't remember being hungry, let's put it this way, or starving or being scared per se. So I'm sure I was fed. But probably was the regular milk, cheese, bread. And maybe there were treats.

>> Bill Benson: Thank you.

I think we have one more question. The gentleman behind you.

>> Thank you very much. I'd like to ask -- after your coming to the United States, I wonder how you were able to adapt into the environment given that you didn't know your background until 1984. My question is, How were you able to adapt with the American community and how were you able to blend in?

>> Bill Benson: So when you came to the United States 10 years old, what was it like for you, how did you adapt and become part of the American culture?

>> Jacques Fein: In terms of me knowing about my background, I didn't really deal with it, as you said, as I said, until 1983 when the gathering occurred. But the first thing I had to do, to be an American, understand the language, the culture, schooling, the new family. And I was able to do that.

And I think the other thing is although I knew I was a bit different than the other kids because I had been born in a different country in my past, I don't think I ever played the Holocaust card. I don't think I ever said, oh, boy, I started grade one when I was 10, oh my God what am I going to do? I didn't play the Holocaust card, even after 1984. So that's how I was able to deal with it.

>> Bill Benson: Ok. Ok. Ok.

I think one more question then we're going to close. Hands keep popping up. Young fellow in the back. The two there and then we'll close.

>> Have you kept in contact with the Catholic family that protected you?

>> Bill Benson: Since you visited the Bocahuts in the 1980s, have you kept in touch with the family?

>> Jacques Fein: I tried to again but it was very, very difficult. The answer is basically no. And, again, those times were so different. It's hard to really explain what happened.

>> Bill Benson: I think you told me when you went back in the 1980s, the parents had already passed away at that point. So this was their children.

>> Jacques Fein: Yeah. When we visited them once, they were, I don't know, three or four living sisters I think. So we visited them. But the other sister, the sister we visited, were not on the same page. They had major disagreements so we had to come back again to see the other one.

>> [Laughter]

>> Bill Benson: I think a young fellow in the very back with his hand up. Let's get your question and then we're going to close our program.

>> Was it normally sad when you were at the orphanage? When your other friends got adopted, was it sad?

>> Bill Benson: When you were in the orphanage and your other friends got adopted, were you really sad about that?

>> Jacques Fein: I only remember being comfortable in the orphanage. I don't remember when other people got adopted. Some people did not get adopted because they found out their families, members, were still surviving somewhere. So it was a process. The best thing I can remember is it was best of times considering what had happened the previous six years.

>> Bill Benson: Thank you. And thank you for all of your questions.

When we finish, when Jacques finishes, Jacques's going to remain here on stage. So if you have a question that we didn't get to or you think of another one, it's a great opportunity to come up and ask him or get your photograph taken with him or just say hi.

Jacques, you'll stay here afterwards for that purpose?

>> Jacques Fein: Sure.

>> Bill Benson: I'd like to thank you all for being with us today. This is our final program of the year. We will resume *First Person* in March 2017. Our website will provide information about next year's program. We hope that we will have Jacques back with us in 2017, if he's willing. So his date along with others -- we run two programs a week, Wednesdays and Thursdays, for five months.

Before I turn to Jacques for his last word to close the program, I'd like to take the liberty, because it is our last program, just acknowledging the tremendous group of people that make *First Person* possible, our Program Manager Sonya Booth, Emily Potter who comes from Survivor Affairs, our wonderful interns and volunteers and other museum staff, Dave and Tom, who none of you will meet but they sit up in the sound booth and handle all of the technical effects that make this possible like microphones and lighting. It's just a wonderful team that makes *First Person* possible. And I want to thank all of them on behalf of the survivors who are our guests here. It's a great group of people that do great work. Ray is over here. He attends all of our programs.

So thank you all very much. And thank you for being a great audience.

>> [Applause]

>> Bill Benson: Don't clap yet. You'll get your chance. We have a last word from Jacques.

>> Jacques Fein: Stand up?

>> Bill Benson: Whatever you would like to do. Your pleasure.

>> Jacques Fein: First of all -- let me sit down.

>> [Laughter]

>> Jacques Fein: First of all, I want to thank Bill and all the staff at the museum for doing this. Bill has been doing this for --

>> Bill Benson: 17.

>> Jacques Fein: 17 years. That's quite an ongoing process and dedicated process. He's been very good. As I said, I've done this about five or six times. It's not difficult for me to do but it feels good.

I also wanted to thank the staff at the museum for being fantastic and doing this.

Second, I'd like to thank all of you for coming here, and my family, Rachel, Judee, and our friend Melissa. That was nice of them to come. Judee is really my support in this whole process, along with Rachel. But Judee has been living with me since 1984. She's the one who has been the backbone of my experiences here.

Now, as far as the Holocaust, all I want to tell you is no one story is the same. Even people who survive concentration camps, they've got different stories. It's all the same but it's all different.

What they did before the war, during the war, and after the war but the details are always different. It's amazing how much stuff I learn doing this. You learn quite a bit from the different questions that are being asked, which is always interesting. And I really want to thank the younger people for asking questions. They were really good. Good of you guys to do it. I hope you learned something different about the Holocaust.

>> Bill Benson: Thank you.

>> Jacques Fein: Thank you.

>> [Applause]