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United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

*First Person: Conversations with Holocaust Survivors*

*First Person* Fritz Gluckstein

July 20, 2017

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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 today. We are in our 18th year of First Person. Our First Person today is Dr. Fritz Gluckstein, whom you shall meet shortly.

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. The museum's website, [www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org), provides information about each of our upcoming First Person guests.

This 2017 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.

Fritz will share with us his "First Person" account of his

experience during the Holocaust and as a survivor for about 45 minutes. If time allows, we will have an opportunity for you to ask him questions.

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

Fritz Gluckstein was born in Berlin, Germany, on January 24, 1927. This photo is from 1932.

He was the son of a Jewish judge and Christian mother, Georg and Hedwig Gluckstein. Here we see Fritz with his parents at the beach. These contemporary photographs show places where Fritz lived, attended school, and played.

As a child, Fritz enjoyed family activities, friends, and school gatherings. Here Fritz is circled in the middle.

After the Nazis came to power, Fritz's father lost his job as a judge and because of his father's and mother's backgrounds, Fritz was considered a *geltungsjude*, a counted Jew. And we will hear more about that in a little bit.

The Nuremberg racial laws based Jewishness on genealogy and religious practice. This is the star that Fritz, as a *geltungsjude*, was required to wear.

Throughout these difficult times, Elfriede Dressler, Fritz's aunt, provided the Glucksteins with much needed extra food as their rations continued to decrease. In this photo we see Fritz and his Aunt Elfriede after the war.

At the end of the war, Fritz's parents stayed in Germany and his father, Georg, resumed his Here we see Fritz with his mother and father after the war.

Fritz decided to immigrate on his own to the United States and arrived in the U.S. in 1948 where he studied veterinary medicine.

Fritz lives in the Washington, D.C. area with his wife, Maran. Following his arrival in the United States after the war, he eventually became a doctor of veterinary medicine.

After a stint in the U.S. Army, Fritz began a long and distinguished career with the federal government including at the U.S. Department of Agriculture and ending with the National Library of Medicine. He became an expert on diseases that are transmitted from animal to humans, like "Mad Cow Disease."

Fritz is a self-described opera buff and a football fan and told me he likes to watch football on TV while listening to the opera. He volunteers for the museum translating letters and other documents written in German, including hand-written documents. He is among a few people who are able to read the old-style German cursive script. He has a daughter, Ruth, and two granddaughters: Emily who is 18 and Brielle is 15. Fritz says they are the joy of his life. And Maran, who would be with us today with Fritz, is today in New York City singing with her choir.

Fritz has authored a memoir about his survival in Berlin. After today's program, he will sign copies of his memoir, "Geltungsjude: Counted as a Jew in Hitler's Berlin," which is also available in the museum's bookstore. Fritz donates all profits earned from the book's sale to this museum. He is also a member of the Survivors Writing Group and a contributor to the museum's publication, "Echoes of Memory."

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

[Applause]

>> Bill Benson: Fritz, thank you so much for being willing to be our First Person today. You have so much to share with us in a short period. We'll start right away if that's ok.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: All right.

>> Bill Benson: You were a young boy when Hitler came to power in Germany. Let's start with I telling us about your family and you during those years, living under the Nazis as their power grew and as part of that, tell us what it meant to be geltungsjude, or counted as a Jew. What did that mean for you and your family.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: A geltungsjude had one Jewish and one non-Jewish parent and was raised Jewish. He was subject to all the regulations and had to wear the star. The Nazis couldn't make up their mind. The farther away he lived from Berlin, the more likely he was to escape deportation because there he was subject to the whims of the local commander.

Before Hitler, we had a very nice life. My father was a judge. He taught me how to salute the flag.

>> Bill Benson: He won the Iron Cross in the First World War?

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Iron Cross in the First World War because didn't serve in Germany. But we had a very good life. Went to the zoo. Watched the big gorilla who when he got an apple, carefully looked. And in one blemish, he would eat it.

My mother was Lutheran. We celebrated both Jewish and Christian holidays. I got the best of two worlds, Hanukkah and Christmas and Passover and Easter.

>> [Laughter]

>> Fritz Gluckstein: But came the day Hitler came to power, my father was dismissed. The day he was dismissed, he told not to Lefcourt

through the front -- not to leave the court through the front door because there was a demonstration. My father said, I "I I came in through the front door and I will be leaving through the front door".

Of course, lost his job, money was quite a problem. We had to move immediately. My Aunt Elfriede helped us very much, stood by us. And my mother's relatives also stood by us. However, my father's colleagues, at least most of them, said, so sorry, we can't have any contact with you.

>> Bill Benson: And these had been colleagues on the court.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Other judges. So sorry. One or two maybe, but most of them simply couldn't or didn't want to, I would say.

>> Bill Benson: Fritz, you were there, of course, during the 1936 Berlin Olympics. Tell us a little bit about that. What did it mean to you?

>> Fritz Gluckstein: 35, 36, signs showed up in restaurants Jews are not welcome, and in the suburbs, go back to Paris signs. There were special benches, the 36 Olympics signs disappeared. The moment after Olympics, they came up again. They didn't want to see, people from other countries, what was going on.

>> Bill Benson: On a bit of a lighter note, as hard as those things were, you were still a boy and you had a mischievous spirit. You were telling me about pranks would play on tourists.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: A friend of mine, sitting on a bus, double-decker, we were sitting there. There was a tour. You see here, that is the President's home. And over there [Indiscernible].

>> Bill Benson: During that time, Fritz, did your father make efforts to try to emigrate from Germany to get out of Germany?

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes, of course. But, of course, in order to emigrate, first you had the quota, then you have to have money, and then you were able to get passage. It wasn't so easy.

>> Bill Benson: And so just all the doors were closed.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Couldn't just pack your suitcase and leave, no. The quota was called. You only got a visa if you had passage. It was quite difficult.

>> Bill Benson: So your family he's alive under these circumstances, as you said, conditions are very hard, food is scarce, your father's lost his job. Then comes Kristallnacht or Night of Broken Glass, November 9 through 10, 1938. You're just 11 years old. Tell us about Kristallnacht.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Well, I went to school as usual. There was a broken shop window. Could have happened. Then another one. The third one I realized something was going on. And then I passed by the synagogue and there were flames and smoke came out.

By the way, how did they know what windows to break? They didn't have lists, no. About a couple of months before, the Jewish shopkeeper had to place his name with white letters on the shop window. All they had to do, look for the big white letters and could break it.

I remember I went to school. Some of our teachers were sent to the concentration camp. Got a notice for home: Because of special circumstances, reports will be late. -- report cards will be late.

>> Bill Benson: Tell our audience what Kristallnacht was. That was something that wasn't just in your community.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: No. It was all over. What had happened, in Paris, a misguided young man shot and killed a council, German member of the embassy. And, of course, in interrogation, there was an outbreak of violence. Actually, the people -- it was done by well organized groups.

>> Bill Benson: And it was all over Germany?

>> Fritz Gluckstein: All over Germany. In fact, Berlin and small cities were even worse. Berlin, of course, wasn't quite as bad as people thought of. But little town, it was horrible.

>> Bill Benson: And on that night hundreds of synagogues before burned throughout Germany.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: And many were sent to the concentration camp. My father fortunately escaped.

>> Bill Benson: Did you realize at the time that it was across the country?

>> Fritz Gluckstein: I had a pretty good idea. We had a pretty good idea.

>> Bill Benson: You said to me -- that was November 1938. You said that the start of the war in September 1939, when Germany invaded Poland, that's when things really changed for Jews and for your family in particular.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Well, of course. First I had to take -- Jews had to take the name of Israel and Sarah. I was Fritz Israel Gluckstein, 1941. Start of the war. It we had to deliver jewelry, radios, bicycles first. And rations, meat, white bread had special allotments. We were allowed only to shop between 4:00 and 5:00 in the afternoon. And a haircut, some of the restrictions.

>> Bill Benson: When you shopped between 4:00 and 5:00, the odds were good there was nothing left in the store.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes. My mother could go if nobody was around. The shopkeeper was decent, wait a minute, I'll give you something. But.

>> Bill Benson: Among all of those restriction that took place, and you mentioned a couple of them, besides radios and things like that, Jews were forbidden from having pets.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes. That's right.

>> Bill Benson: Talk about, if you don't mind sharing, about your pet.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: We took care of a pet of friends who were deported. They had trained him. If you gave him a piece of food and said "From the Jew" he ate it. But if you said "From the Nazis" he did not.

>> [Laughter]

>> Bill Benson: When did first start having to wear the star?

>> Fritz Gluckstein: At that time, 41.

>> Bill Benson: And one of the things you shared with me is that police would come by with pencils.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Oh, yes. There was a nasty policeman came with a pencil. And if you get a pencil behind, pretty bad.

>> Bill Benson: When did deportations begin?

>> Fritz Gluckstein: In 1941. It started slowly and then more and more after.

>> Bill Benson: Including many of your classmates and friends.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: When you had a neighbor or a classmate or a colleague who was deported, did you have any idea where they were being sent?

>> Fritz Gluckstein: No. Well, first, they said, well, maybe -- some idea. Never really knew. At the beginning, actually, notice you would be deported. And then they got the list. They had to list their belongings and furniture. And in a certain time came an officer, actually a policeman, and had to seal the arm -- apartment, and had to go to the closest, nearest, corrections place and from there we were transported.

>> Bill Benson: During that time, where were you living? Were you



still in your own home?

>> Fritz Gluckstein: A small apartment.

>> Bill Benson: Into a small apartment.

The allies started bombing Berlin about that time, too. What was that like for you? You're facing the Nazis --

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Hoped we wouldn't be hit. At that time I was still going to school. If class beyond 1:00, school started two hours late.

>> Bill Benson: In the morning?

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yeah. And we were sitting hoping it would stop soon. On the other hand, maybe a little bit longer and school will be shorter.

>> Bill Benson: Sounds like a typical kid.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: At that time, yes. And school closed 1942.

>> Bill Benson: And being a kid, besides hoping that the bombing would delay school, you also had a hobby of collecting shrapnel.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes. Collected shrapnel and exchanged for bigger shrapnel. Boys.

>> Bill Benson: As you began to tell us, you were able to continue school until June 1942 and then the schools closed. After that you had several very close calls yourself with deportation. Tell us about those and the events that followed. And also tell us about the closing of school for you.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Closing schools and they gave me a final report card. The reason, because of the ordered closing of the Jewish schools. I guess most of my classmates were deported. A few, one, two, came back. One or two went in hiding. And if you were a *geltungsjuden*, you survived but about 35, 40, all perished, and so did the teachers, most of them.

>> Bill Benson: I was struck, in your book you write so eloquently

about your teachers and your fellow students as everyday heroes.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yeah. Particularly the teachers. They came, taught us, helped us to forget the misery of everyday. They gave us something we could build on later on. They came. We knew they were deported but true to their profession they came. They didn't realize -- we didn't realize it, we didn't appreciate it. Now I know what they did.

>> Bill Benson: I was really struck by what you wrote about that.

You had a very frightening experience when your mother helped someone who was facing deportation.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes. My mother helped someone carry suitcases to the collection point. An SS man what are you doing? Tomorrow, if your son and husband report downtown to the correction center. Downtown was the special collection center. There we were, about the time there were 10 men in a room and they also had non-Jewish wives. Permitted to lie down because the Kommandant -- a nasty SS. He had forbidden to lie down but did it anyway. However, the policemen who guarded the building, whenever he left, the other came running out, "Get up, get up. He's coming." Remarkable. We been caught, we would have wound up at the Russian front.

>> Bill Benson: Is this when you encountered [Indiscernible]?

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes, yes. Nasty. Came from Vienna. Well, after two or three days, the Kommandant's office for interrogation. Well, my father and an old gentleman prepared me, don't show any sign of contempt or hostility, answer the question fully but do not, do not volunteer anything.

Well, I went in the office. He was sitting there behind his desk. At the side about 10 uniformed SS. He tried to catch me really -- your mother is Jewish? No, I said, my mother is [Inaudible].

I had questions working at the Jewish community. I tell you,

give you a decent job. Tomorrow report to the labor exchange.

Outside I found my father. He stepped out. A sigh of relief. To date, January 24, 1943, my 16th birthday, that was the first.

>> Bill Benson: That was the first. Tell us about the next one.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: The second one. We were at the factory. One morning a good friend of mine was sitting at the bench doing some work for the Air Force. Suddenly the door opens and the SS officer comes in. Get yourself outside! Outside we assembled. Asked the driver to come in. The truck came. Put on the truck. And then back to the SS, we were driven downtown. There we were in what had been a dance hall. All the tables and chairs had been removed and we camped in the middle. For some of the women -- it was Saturday, half day, plenty of the children were in childcare, maybe at home. It was very bad for them.

We were sitting there. It was amazing. No complaints. We were sitting there. After hours, called by a very nice plain-clothed man, get out of here, don't want to see you here again. We stepped out, about 8:00 at night. And by stepping out at 8:00 at night, we broke the law because curfew for Jews was 8:00, through the winter 10:00 at night. We walked home.

My mother was on a trip visiting her aunt. Sent a telegram, it would be advisable if you came home fast. The next morning, just time to get ration and I went to the ration card office and lo and behold there was a big moving van. Everyone came on the moving van. And we were transported to collection for the synagogue where I had my bar mitzvah three years ago.

Then again we were transported downtown to a building of the Jewish congregation, so-called Rosenstrasse. And there we were, quartered in the room just enough to lie down. We spent our time

deliberating what happened to us.

Standing in line -- of course, facilities weren't set for hundreds of men to come in. After a week or so, I remember, we got once at 4:00 turnips to eat, I remember.

After a week or so, was called out. My release slip was typed by a secretary of the Jewish congregation. And my father, too. And we both were ready to leave. We had to present our release slip to the sergeant, Sergeant Schneider. He looked at my father and said, I judge you have been but you've certainly ruled the lives of many people. My father said, I hope not. And we left.

But, what we did not know, while we were inside, there was a demonstration where the mothers and wives demonstrated, demanded the release of the children and husbands. Fight first the regular police, then the SS and Gestapo. It was the only challenge to authority to Third Reich.

Said, no, let's not have it now. We can take care of the mixed marriages, geltungsjude let on, not know. Right after the Battle of Stalingrad.

So after that I was sent to labor camp. We went side-to-side cleaning up after air raids.

>> Bill Benson: Before we move on to that, just so we all hear that, it was the only demonstration to the Third Reich.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: The only demonstration against authority. They didn't go.

>> Bill Benson: And there's even been a movie made about this.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes, a movie made. And now there is of the people who stood up for their loved ones, yes.

>> Bill Benson: So now both you and your father are forced to be part of these work details. So you started to tell us, what were you forced

to do?

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Well, we had to clean up the ruins. We moved around and cleaned up streets. Actually there was an accident, part of a wall fell on me, knocked me out and I was injured. There was a medic. He fixed me up temporarily. They brought me to a hospital but were not permitted, non-Jewish hospital were not permitted to help Jews but they did it anyway. Sewed me up. They took a risk on my behalf. They could have gotten in real trouble but they took a risk. I'll never forget that.

>> Bill Benson: I was struck -- you shared with me that as you were out there doing these work details where you're forced to clean up rubble, really hard work out there --

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes. Actually, of course, there were four other young, former classmates. And the older men, lawyers, chemists, engineers. Of course, young people don't learn anything. They thought it a kind of school.

In my case, I remember a wheel barrel, when was being filled, I was given a question to which I had to answer when I came back. And still remember one. When you come back with an empty wheel barrel, it remained the Great Lakes of the United States. Something else imagined 50, 60 years. Of course, first the older men had to explain to us some of the language to be used. Became very helpful later on when I worked in a factory. Some nice people, really vital, taught me four-letter words. I tried very much. It didn't work because those words came [Indiscernible] very similar in German and they did not work.

>> Bill Benson: At one point during these forced labor work details you were told that you were going to now have to do -- you had a catastrophic mission.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes. We were bombed out twice. Temporarily in

the Jewish hospital. In the morning I set out for my regular job, stepped out of the building, suddenly some SS came. Go on the truck there. You're detached to so-called catastrophe mission.

Well, after riding the truck, open it up, and there we were in front of the devil's den. Eichmann's headquarter. Eichmann was the driving force behind the depore deportation. You knew who Eichmann was.

Well, very lucky, worked there. One young lieutenant, I was assigned to him. I was lucky, he was very decent, not anti-Semitic, really. Some of the other fellows had a very rough supervisor, nasty time. Deputy commander running around with a dog and cursing, tried to sneak up. I was lucky, again. Might move furniture. He was very civil.

Well, one day -- I guess we moved from rubbish. Said Ikeman -- Eichmann is coming. Oh, boy. I wondered, really wondered, how we would look like. Ordinary. Nobody noticed in the crowd. Came right next to me, gave some instruction, and left again.

>> Bill Benson: This absolute monster.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: I stood shoulder and shoulder with that monster but lucky.

>> Bill Benson: During that time, middle to the end of the war, you're in Berlin. As you described it to me, Berlin was bombed all the time, frequently. Food was scarce. Conditions were more and more difficult. How did you and your parents manage to survive and exist under those conditions? What was it like for you then?

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Well, you adapt. Didn't lose hope. It was amazing. Food was scarce. A loaf of bread, the mice had gotten into it. Well, cut off what was important and continued eating. And, of course, didn't change clothes very often. No hot water, no soap. You

just adapted. And, of course, for spirit, always told little story and jokes that helped us.

[Inaudible] young man pulled him out. Friend, you saved my life. What can I do for you? I want a state funeral. State funeral. Yes. And father finds out I pulled you out of the river, he's going to kill me. SS man said, I am going to shoot you. Unless you tell me which one of my eye is glass. Oh, he said. Very easy. It's the right one. How do you know? Oh, it looks so human.

>> [Laughter]

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Then, of course [Inaudible]. The bread was horrible. Sometimes I don't know what they put in there. Everything substitute. My father, when will this war be over? Well, when the British eat rats and German eat rats substitute.

Those little stories.

>> Bill Benson: As the German defense of Berlin was collapsing, you said to me that you and your friends figured it would take 31 minutes for the Russian tanks to get through the barriers that had been put up.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yeah. What happened one day, fall 1941 -- 44, we were detached to build foundations for a new Berlin after the war. At that time. But detached again to build tanks, perhaps there. -- traps. There we were digging ditches, 40-degree angles. So at night, I guess, middle of the night they gave us some soup. Next morning they told us, ok, you can go.

Well, we looked at our handy work and thought, now how long will it take the Russians to get through? 31 minutes. The Russian tanks will come, tank traps, will laugh for 30 minutes and take one minute to get through.

>> [Laughter]

>> Fritz Gluckstein: That's actually what happened. Two armies

approached Berlin, from the east, from the South. Coming from the South, got in very, very fast. They couldn't get to the Jews. There wasn't too much fighting anyhow. I believe we helped a little bit. It didn't do a very good job but actually helped us.

>> Bill Benson: In fact, you said you survived because of your mother, luck, and the marshal.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: The eastern part of Berlin [Inaudible]

>> Bill Benson: Back to a point you were making a few moments ago, Fritz. There's the Third Reich literally collapsing. You were assigned to build the foundations for the new Berlin.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Foundation for a new Berlin after the war.

>> Bill Benson: At what point did you believe or know that you really were safe?

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Well, when the war was over. We were working close to an SS -- what do you call it? Where they keep people.

>> Bill Benson: A barrack?

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Barrack. Lo and behold what did we see? A group of heavy trucks being pushed by SS men. If SS doesn't have any gasoline [Inaudible] then we realized it was pretty much over.

We were delighted at their misfortune. I never forget it.

>> Bill Benson: I've read several accounts of the Russian assault on Berlin and then about life in that devastated city in the months following the war. If you'll say the threat from the Nazis is over but now you're occupied by the Soviets in an absolutely devastated city, what was life like for you immediately after the war?

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Actually food at the beginning was pretty bad. But actually after a while the Russians came in -- we were lucky. We had some food in our place we lived. We had to move many times. Last apartment with two other couples. And downstairs was the horse



butcher. The Russians brought the wounded horses to the butcher and we could eat -- we had some horse meat.

Actually, what happened, at the time Jews still had meat, we could go to the horse -- could have gotten double. One of our relatives fed meat to the family and they never knew what are you feeding. Oh, the butcher is very nice and gave us. Horse meat. When you have nothing else, you eat it.

>> Bill Benson: How did the Russians treat you?

>> Fritz Gluckstein: First I remember -- came home and the Russians were already at the apartment. But, of course, didn't believe me, Nazi, Jews, one of the people explained. He believed that it wasn't SS.

>> Bill Benson: You had to convince them.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes. Young man what are you doing here?

>> Bill Benson: Did you or others that survived, did you consider taking revenge on the Germans?

>> Fritz Gluckstein: No. We thought, yes. But we wouldn't lower ourselves to this. No. No.

>> Bill Benson: You shared with me, and you wrote about it, too, that the winter of 1945 to 1946 was exceptionally a tough winter. What were conditions like then?

>> Fritz Gluckstein: At that time -- the Russians, American, British and the French. Russians black bread, Americans black bread. We knew who was in charge. It was a horrible winter. And imagine, water pipes broke, toilet couldn't be used. Can you imagine? People lived in a suburb [Inaudible]. What did you do? Well, you could see people with little packages which they deposited in box in the front lawns. Freezing was ok but you can imagine what happened after it thawed. But that was war.

>> Bill Benson: When was your father able to begin to resume his

work and his life after the war?

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Well, after the war actually I was able to go back to school and my father was reinstated, the time he lost. Sorry. Old age.

>> Bill Benson: He was reinstated, got credit for his time.

So as Berlin was being rebuilt and beginning to come back, and of course it was divided up between control of the Soviets, French, British and the Americans. By 1948, you managed to come to the United States.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: I decided. My parents let me go with heavy heart. My father said if I were 10 years younger, God bless you. But today I can't. It's a completely different law. American law based on old English law. I could not carry on my profession, but you go, he said, "I hope you will choose a profession that is not limited to one country." So I did.

>> Bill Benson: And to be a veterinarian. You can be a veterinarian anywhere. Sound advice from your dad.

Your father and your mother stayed in Berlin. Did many other Jews stay in Berlin?

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Several. I would say the younger left. The older people stayed because difficult to start a new life, a new language but the young people left. I would say, yes.

>> Bill Benson: I was struck, you wrote in your book that after the war you're going back to school. You were in a class and in your classroom there were kids who like you, young men who hadn't had an education, and returning German soldiers in the same classroom.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes. Well, after three years no school, went to school, special courses in order to make up. We studied for the final examination. There were German and Jews. And some of the German

young men had to leave early. At the beginning it was quite cool but then we realized they were not all Nazis and they realized Jews are not actually different from any other people. And we got along quite well.

>> Bill Benson: So what was it like to come to the United States for you? You came over on a ship. What was it like? And you were how old, 21?

>> Fritz Gluckstein: I was 21 on the boat. 30th January 1948. I remember that. Standing on the ship. It was night. Looked in the street, cars moving. I wondered, between expectation and apprehension. Some people had great difficulties.

An organization I joined sent us to a hotel and there we had to wait to be sent to a city where the Jewish congregation had agreed to take care of some newcomers. And said, well, you can go either to Detroit or St. Paul, capital of Minneapolis. I studied quite a bit about the United States and I chose to go to St. Paul. I knew it would be very cold in Minnesota but I had not heard yet, described as having only two seasons, July and winter.

>> [Laughter]

>> Fritz Gluckstein: It was very cold in Minnesota.

>> Bill Benson: Tell us what your name means.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Good luck stone.

>> Bill Benson: You talked about that in your book. Good luck stone.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Actually I had to decide, shall I change my name? Should I call myself gladstone? No. Should I keep Fritz? Well in St. Paul I went through the phone, and not many Fritz's, many Scandinavian, lived in St. Paul and I kept the name.

>> Bill Benson: We mentioned you're an opera fan. Tell us how that started.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Jews were not permitted to have radios. I had [Indiscernible]. Without electricity it was wonderful. I listened every night. Whenever we could expect an air raid. Tomorrow night they're going to broadcast an opera, "Tosca." I'm going to listen. If I'm lucky there will be no air raid. Ok, I put on my headphones and listened. And I was completely tranced by the music. The opera, the diction was excellent. I could follow. Not half an hour I listened, two hours until "Tosca" [Inaudible] and from there I became opera.

>> Bill Benson: What has it meant to you to write your book, your memoir? What has that meant to you?

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Well, I think people might want to see what happened. Actually more or less to tell. I came over here and could make it, I would say. My more or less gratitude that in spite of all, it wasn't easy but, yes, school, studying, had many jobs, elevator operator, busboy, [Inaudible], and helping Ph.D. candidates in their German examination. Didn't charge enough but really was called to order for undermining the going rate. But I was able to make it.

>> Bill Benson: Yes, you were. In a stellar way. One last question and then we'll turn to our audience for a couple of questions.

In light of the fact that you had homes bombed out and you lost so much, how were you able to manage to have those photographs we saw earlier?

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes. Well, of course, bombed out twice. But, of course, my good aunt, got pictures, and, of course, reproduced and gave back to us.

>> Bill Benson: That's the only reason you have those photos?

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Only reason. Otherwise nothing left. Bombed out twice. Absolutely.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Let's turn to our audience for a few questions. We

have microphones in each aisle. We ask that you wait until you get a microphone if you have a question. Try to make your question as brief as you can. I'll repeat it just to make sure that we understand it correctly, and then Fritz will respond to it.

Do we have anybody -- we have right here in the front row. Ok. We can hear you but the back of the room may not so we have to put a mic in your hand.

>> After you came to America, were you able to communicate with your father and your mother or today even your extended family that's still in Germany?

>> Bill Benson: The question --

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: Ok. Fritz has got it.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: At that time telephone and letters.

>> [Question Inaudible]

>> Bill Benson: Was the system disrupted after the war? Could you communicate freely with your parents? Right after the war.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: And your father eventually came to the United States.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: I was stationed in the Army at Fort Detrick and my parents visited.

>> Bill Benson: Ok. Another question. One over here.

>> When did it become apparent to you and your family and your neighbors the magnitude of what was with to happen?

>> Bill Benson: When did it become apparent to you and your family and others around you the magnitude of what was actually taking place with the Holocaust and what did take place?

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Well, of course, we knew something was going on but actually we never knew exactly what happened. At the

beginning we still could send some food to people in Polish cities.

After a while, no call back. And, of course, we had an idea but didn't know for sure.

>> Bill Benson: How quickly, when the war ended, did you actually know what had happened?

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Some people came back, some were survivors and told us what happened. And, of course, it was publicized, of course, by the occupying forces what had happened. Made clear what happened.

>> Bill Benson: Thank you.

Another question? All right.

Well, after we finish today, Fritz will go upstairs and he is going to sign copies of his book. He will be available to sign it. So that will also be an opportunity to ask Fritz another question if you have one or just say hi to him.

Fritz, thank you for being our First Person.

[Applause]

It's our tradition at *First Person* that our First Person gets the last word. So I'm going to turn back to Fritz for the last word.

I want to thank all of you for being here, remind you we'll have programs each Wednesday and Thursday until August 10. The museum's website will have information about *First Person* in 2018 so we hope that if you have the opportunity, you'll come back and join us.

And one more thing before Fritz gets up on the stage, and that is that our photographer, Lolitta, will come up on the stage, take a photo of Fritz with you as the background. So if you would stay with us for that, that would be great. And then we're going to try to get Fritz up as quickly as we can so he can sign copies of his book.

Fritz, it's yours.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: It was my good fortune to come to the United States. I am forever grateful for the help I received and the opportunity given to me. I value my American citizenship most highly.

I am often asked what I have learned from my experience. My answer is always the same. Don't do to others what you don't want done to yourself. And do it now. Pay that visit. Make that call. Write that letter. If you have a dream, go after it now. And if you have two bottles of wine, drink the better one first.

>> [Laughter]

[Applause]