

UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM (USHMM)
USHMM-FIRST PERSON
Thursday, July 5, 2018
10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Remote CART Captioning

Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) captioning is provided in order to facilitate communication accessibility and may not be a totally verbatim record of the proceedings. This transcript is being provided in rough-draft format.



First Person Series
Frank Liebermann
July 5, 2018

>> 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 the 19th year of the "First Person" program. Thank you for joining us. You will meet Frank Liebermann shortly. This 2018 season of the "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 support. "First Person" is a series of twice-weekly conversations with survivors of the Holocaust who share with us their firsthand accounts of the experience during the Holocaust. Each of the "First Person" guests serves as a volunteer here at this museum. Our program will continue through mid-August. The museum's website at www.ushmm.org provides information about each of our upcoming "First Person" guests.

Frank will share with us his "First Person" account of his experience during the Holocaust and as a survivor for about 45 minutes. If we have time toward the end of the program, we will have an opportunity to ask Frank questions. If we do not get to your questions today, please join us in our online conversation, never stop asking why. The conversation aims to inspire individuals and new generations to ask the important questions that Holocaust history raises and what that history means for societies today. To join the Never Stop Asking Why conversation, you can ask your question and tag the Museum on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram using [atria](#) and

the hashtag #AskWhy. You can find the hashtag on the back of your program as well.

A recording of this program will be made visible on the Museum's YouTube page. Please visit the "First Person" website listed on the back of your program for more details.

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 the photograph of Frank Liebermann. He was born in Gleiwitz, Germany, now Poland, in 1929. On the left is Hans Liebermann and, on the right, Lottie, and her first granddaughter, Joanie. They lived in that part of Germany, now Poland, for several years. He is pictured with his fraternal grandparents Bernard and Jenny Liebermann. Hitler came to power in 1933. When Frank was in school in 1935, Jewish students were separated in fear of anti-Semitic attacks. They were 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. 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 that 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. Frank graduated in 1950 and 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 67 years who sadly passed away this last August. Frank worked in textile manufacturing until 1992 when he and Marianne moved to the Washington, DC. area to be closer to their children. Frank lasted three months in retirement before going into the travel business which he continues today, specializing in Europe and U.S. travel, including Alaska. He's with an agency here in Maryland called Signature Travel. 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 27.

A number of Frank's family members are here in town this week for a family wedding and they are able to be here with Frank today. I think a total of 14 of them seated right here to my right.

[Applause]

Frank volunteers at the Museum's Visitor Services. He's here Thursday morning, I think he got today off to be with us. He speaks to visitors and speaks with wounded veterans at the former Walter

Reed Hospital as well as at other locations. With that, I would like you to join me in welcoming our "First Person," Mr. Frank Liebermann.

[Applause]

Frank, thank you for joining us today. And for being willing with so much going on this weekend with your family. I'm glad you took the time to be our "First Person" today. So, thank you for that. We have just an hour. So, I know there's a lot to share which we will start. Hitler came to power in 1933. You've told me that your earliest memories began in 1934 when you were about 5 years old. You also said of that time all in all, it was a good time for your parents. Tell us why that was so and what you can about your family, your life in Gleiwitz in those first few years of your life.

>> Frank Liebermann: Gleiwitz was a town of about -- a little over 100,000 people. Industrial in the eastern part of Germany. I had a pretty normal upbringing. As was common, we lived in the middle of town where my father also had the office and we had a three-room apartment in the back. And I have good memories of that time. I also want to say, you mentioned 1933. Three significant things happened in 1933 that affected my family.

One was my father bought a car. It was a tiny convertible. Smaller than a Bug. But it gave us -- he used it not to get around to see anybody because it was fast and easier to take the streetcar which was right in front of our house. And he could take it to the hospital in five minutes. We had about a five-minute walk to the hospital. But it got me much closer to my grandparents who lived -- my father's parents were in Boynton, about 20 miles east. And my mother's family lived in -- maybe 40 miles northwest.

We practically traveled every week and it affected my life. The other thing that happened was my grandparents celebrated the 100th anniversary of the family business which was Wholesale Leather, including a tannery. And they felt very secure in the community which ultimately led to their demise. That, of course, was the coming of Hitler which changed everybody's life completely.

>> Bill Benson: Frank, when your father married your mother, by that time he was fairly well established professionally, wasn't he?

>> Frank Liebermann: He started a practice about a year before that. He got a very quick start because both of his main teachers of his residency was in Breslau, which was quite a distance away. And this was no equivalent in this area. So, he really was established pretty early and, as I said, I grew up in a very nice middle-class family.

>> Bill Benson: You did start school in 1935. Attending public school. And you told me that recess was, for you, the most dangerous time. Will you say a little bit about that?

>> Frank Liebermann: We had to go outside for about 15 minutes. And at that time the schoolyard was divided by boys on one

side and girls on the other. And we kind of tried to stay in the middle for safety reasons. Also, we started about five minutes late. We were told not to come early.

>> Bill Benson: Jewish students.

>> Frank Liebermann: Yes, yes. We had actually -- this was for the first three years. We actually had three classrooms and we also were dismissed five minutes early and told to leave because it was most dangerous to be in a group. Individually you couldn't be singled out. But if we were in groups, we were told to disperse and immediately head for home. Which we did.

>> Bill Benson: Because of threats against you?

>> Frank Liebermann: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: From other kids, right?

>> Frank Liebermann: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: Frank, in 1936, circumstances for your parents turned more ominous and became more difficult, if not dangerous. What changed in 1936 and what did it mean for your family and for you?

>> Frank Liebermann: In 1921 the Treaty of Riga which is around the Baltic basically solidified the borders of the boundaries of Poland after the Poland-Russian War right after the Russian Revolution. That treaty gave minorities on each side of the border protections. It was equal for Poles as well as Germans. And they were protected for -- all minorities were protected for 15 years. It was in everybody's self-interest to abide by the treaty. At the end of that basically the Nazis implemented all of the rules and laws which they started in 1933.

And that led to my father not being -- losing his hospital privileges. Every street corner had a "Stuermer" which would be a propaganda newspaper showing caricatures and basically giving strictly anti-Semitic propaganda. It also started blockades of Jewish schools. I'm sorry, Jewish businesses. For instance, any stores with graffiti. There was one in front of our apartment house, presenting everybody from coming in and threatening them with loss of jobs if they continued to see my father. In addition, he couldn't collect insurance in a country where socialized medicine basically did everything through insurance. And he lost his hospital privileges, as I said.

So, he knew that this was serious and started looking for ways to leave against the advice and blessing of my mother's parents who said, "Somehow we'll get through this. It will blow over and we can help you."

>> Bill Benson: They had a hundred years of business and felt secure.

>> Frank Liebermann: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: Frank, in 1936, I believe, your mother made a

trip to Israel. Tell us about that trip.

>> Frank Liebermann: She and her brother went to Israel to explore what the possibilities were. And there she found out that there was in Israel by that time, there was one doctor for every hundred people. And that the only possibilities were to work in the Kibbutz. Something which they felt they weren't suited for

>> Bill Benson: So that ended that.

>> Frank Liebermann: That ended that. And as I said, my mother's brother stayed too long.

>> Bill Benson: Frank, when I -- after she came back from that trip, or at least in that year, your family decided it was urgent that you needed swimming lessons.

>> Frank Liebermann: No, that was before.

>> Bill Benson: Before, okay. Okay. Tell us about the urgent swimming lessons.

>> Frank Liebermann: My parents had -- I won't be able to use the swimming pool once the treaty was over in July. And they signed me up for swimming lessons because we might take an ocean voyage and it would be good judgment to know how to swim.

One day, I think it was in June, my grandfather came with me. My father's father and said, "I'm not leaving until you pass the swimming test." Which meant that you had to tread water or swim for 20 minutes without stopping. Once I started, I got -- I was certified for an hour. And I've liked swimming ever since.

>> Bill Benson: And have continued to be very athletic. Frank, you talked about your maternal grandparents, successful business, over a hundred years. You shared with me what you called the downhill slide of their business between 1933 and 1938. Say a little bit about that.

>> Frank Liebermann: Our -- their accountant, Mr. Snobles, was not Jewish. And he kept the records of the business which started with 100,000 in 1933. And it was down to 20 in 1930 --

>> Bill Benson: So, 80% drop in business.

>> Frank Liebermann: Correct. Because of boycotts.

>> Bill Benson: Things you described.

>> Frank Liebermann: Yes. By the way, those records are with the museum.

>> Bill Benson: Frank, with your father losing his medical privileges and therefore his practice, how did he make ends meet for the family after that?

>> Frank Liebermann: Fortunately, they had some savings. And we did the best we could. Also, we went -- by that time, our bank accounts were frozen, and you were only allowed to collect to spend as much as the government committed because taking any -- any more wasn't allowed.

>> Bill Benson: So, even if you had the funds --

>> Frank Liebermann: You couldn't use it. And you could not transfer when we came to the United States.

>> Bill Benson: You shared with me that even though your family didn't keep a kosher kitchen, at that time you only bought kosher meat. Which was that?

>> Frank Liebermann: Gleiwitz had about a thousand families. They varied between liberal and very orthodox. And everybody bought from the kosher butcher to keep them in business so that the people who needed it had access. It was a very tight-knit community and everybody tried to help everybody else.

>> Bill Benson: In 1938, in January of 1938, your father made a trip to the United States which then made it possible for him to move to the United States in June of that year. Tell us about that trip in January and then the events that led up to his departure six months later in June 1938?

>> Frank Liebermann: My maternal grandfather had found a cousin. His father's daughter's husband. He came to him in 1925 and said he desperately needed a loan for one week. That was a gift to him. Unfortunately, he used it to come to the United States.

>> Bill Benson: That was a lot of money, right?

>> Frank Liebermann: That was a lot of money. 3,000. Put the business in some danger. They recovered from it. But when we had no relatives in the United States, he suggested that my father see his son who at that time worked for Aviation and had a pretty substantial job.

>> Bill Benson: Here in the United States.

>> Frank Liebermann: In the United States. And he did get an affidavit promising that he won't need welfare for one year. That was a requirement to emigrate to the United States. Because remember, 1938 was the second leg of the Great Depression. In other words, it started in 1929. And the recovery in 1936 and '37. And then due to a mistake balancing the budget, 1938 was the second tier of a downturn which increased unemployment again and led to some pretty hard times.

>> Bill Benson: So, this was Charlie Marcus, the son of a fellow, took the loan from your grandfather.

>> Frank Liebermann: But we did get the visa.

>> Bill Benson: Did get the visa.

>> Frank Liebermann: And got a number of immigration from Germany to the United States.

>> Bill Benson: You know I want you to tell us Fraulein Schmidt.

>> Frank Liebermann: When times are tough, we got the number in January and by April nothing had happened. And due to circumstances in what we were talking about, my father called a friend and said, what do I do to expedite it? I can't make a living, and

nothing is happening. He said, well, the Counsel has a secretary, Fraulein Schmidt. Why don't you send her a nice box of candy in order to help?

And a month later, still nothing happened. My father called the friend again, didn't you put in a box of candy? So, she got another box of candy. And about a week later we got an invitation to take a physical at the Counsel in Berlin. That was in June. And we did get a visa end of June. And due to the fact that we didn't take any money out, and my father had to study for the State Boards in order to get accredited in the United States, he took the next boat. The circumstances which forced us to take a German ship. Because if you took the cheapest -- but if you took the first-class ticket, you got a pretty good spending allowance which you could transfer to the -- into American dollars.

>> Bill Benson: If it was a German ship.

>> Frank Liebermann: If it was a German ship. And so, he proceeded -- he proceeded to take, again, the cheapest first-class ticket. He got to the United States. He decided to study for the State Boards in Ohio because Ohio passed 50% of all applicants -- foreign applicants. And didn't have an excess of doctors like New York where the split was 90/10. In other words, if someone recommended the surgeon, he expected a kickback of 90%. And that's not a good -- that isn't a good way to start.

>> Bill Benson: Frank, before we continue with your father in the United States and how you got here, after he got the visas, at some point the gestapo came to visit him. Can you tell us about that?

>> Frank Liebermann: Yes. Right after he got the visa he canceled his lease. Now, in Germany at the time if -- the presence of a long-term lease required that you give the landlord a mortgage. In other words, they lent him money which secured your lease until it was canceled. And with the cancellation, the landlord turned over -- transferred the amount of the mortgage to my father's bank account which was at another bank. Somebody at the landlord's bank called the Gestapo and said a large amount of money was just transferred out of the account to Dr. Liebermann. And two Gestapo agents came to his office and said, doctor, you're under arrest.

He said, "Why?" And they said that you withdrew a large amount -- sum of money out of the -- out of the bank that's uncommitted. He was fortunately able to call the President of the bank who assured the officers that the money was transferred to the a frozen account which couldn't be used. And they left. By the way, I have one thing to tell you. That the visa was good for 120 days. So, in order to preserve cash, my mother and I booked our passage for October so that we would close up the household and, again, preserve cash. So, we worked hard for about four months.

>> Bill Benson: Why were you forced to be apart? Why didn't

you go with your father in June?

>> Frank Liebermann: We were able to take out 10 marks. Which is about \$2.50.

>> Bill Benson: That's what you were allowed to leave Germany?

>> Frank Liebermann: Yes. So, during the time that my father was studying he lived in a furnished room for \$5 a week. And I suppose we stayed and waited until the last possible minute and then we lived on the money that we got a spending allowance.

>> Bill Benson: Because of the ticket?

>> Frank Liebermann: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: You were there several more months. 120 more days. What was that period like for you?

>> Frank Liebermann: Kind of tough. We had moved out. We stayed with another family in a furnished -- for about the last month. During this period also being mischievous I pulled my arm in a private backyard which -- in order to -- this was done at friends. The yard which we used as a playground for about five families.

>> Bill Benson: Because you couldn't use public playgrounds or anything.

>> Frank Liebermann: Now, when I broke my arm, you couldn't call 911. Or didn't call. I followed my best judgment. I rode my bicycle home. Successfully. My mother immediately called the hospital, the orthopedist gave an answer. And this was somebody whom they had not socialized with but gone to dinner with. And had a relationship. So, I don't treat children.

>> Bill Benson: Professional --

>> Frank Liebermann: Professional relationship.

>> Bill Benson: With your father --

>> Frank Liebermann: Correct. So, my mother frantically got on the phone and reached somebody in my father's hometown which was about 20 miles away and got an answer that she should take a taxi and go to the back door of the orphanage. He would meet us there in an hour. And he went on to set my arm. Put it in a cast. And then gave instructions for my pediatrician to exercise it to get the mobility back. He did such a good job that today my left arm bends further than my right one.

And we survived that episode.

>> Bill Benson: So, for your mother, the fear of having to -- of you getting sick or her getting sick must have been just a terrifying time for her. She's waiting for this period to end so you can leave.

>> Frank Liebermann: I had strong, gutsy parents. And I also had quite a bit of freedom. I was able to move on my bicycle. Again, if I was alone, I had no fear. You get certain inklings of what you can do and what you can't. And they worked up to that point. But we left -- we actually left Germany a month before Kristallnacht which I

considered the start of the Holocaust.

>> Bill Benson: And we're going to come back to that in a moment.

>> Frank Liebermann: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: When you left, it was at the very end of your 120 days. The very end.

>> Frank Liebermann: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: And as I remember, you were telling me that your father, because to communicate at that time, he was trying to urge your mother to leave earlier.

>> Frank Liebermann: Yes. They talked about that. You may or may not have heard about the Munich Treaty during which Hitler and the British Prime Minister came to us, and the French Prime Minister had a meeting with Hitler in Munich in September 1938. In which Hitler demanded the area, the border of Czechoslovakia which the two prime ministers gave to Hitler without Czechoslovakia's consent. For the famous quote of Chamberlain saying, that this will buy peace in our time. Peace in our time lasted one year. When the meeting started, Hitler called back all ships at sea and threatened war.

That's why we got the -- when this happened the ship lost four days. It started up -- the passage was six days. But it left every Saturday. When we got to the ship on October 12th, which was a Saturday, there was no ship. When we got to Bremerhaven. We had no idea that this had anything to do with Munich.

But it took four weeks in order get back on schedules. The ship came in on Sunday. And we didn't find out everything that happened during this time until we were on the ship. Remember, there was no Internet. It was a capital crime to listen to foreign radio stations. There was no free press. Everything was strictly under government control. And this is how the propaganda not only affected all of Germany, but also persuaded the whole world to close Germany for immigration.

There were only two places at the end where people could go. One was Shanghai and the second one was Dominican Republic which welcomed the knowledge that people brought.

>> Bill Benson: So, Frank, you finally did make the ship. You left Germany. What do you remember of your passage to the United States?

>> Frank Liebermann: It was during hurricane season. I spent -- I was fascinated by watching the ship basically dive into a wave, kind of stay under, and then jump up. And, boy, did I feel it in the cabin which was in the front of the ship when it was like an elevator. At one time I was one of six people in the first-class dining room because the weather was so bad.

The other five sat at the Captain's table. I had my own table.

>> Bill Benson: And if I remember correctly, your mother was

exception -- was very anxious. She wanted you to keep a low profile. Of course, there you are going off and dining by yourself. But she was worried. She was worried the entire trip about you.

>> Frank Liebermann: But --

>> Bill Benson: You made it. Tell us about getting to the United States and reuniting with your father.

>> Frank Liebermann: He picked us up in New York. That time traveled by Greyhound Bus. But I was involved. We took the Empire State Express which was a 12-hour ride from New York via -- took a trip, New York, Albany, Buffalo, Cleveland. And we had -- my father had rented a one-bedroom apartment. And this was my home from the minute we stepped in. It was no question that this was it. And I had a very nice teacher. I was started in 3B, that was about a year behind. There were no teachers like my wife was to help with teachers with English as a second language. But Miss Emmanuel was very helpful. And that was my home.

>> Bill Benson: Frank, you were able to bring some goods, but you couldn't bring money, \$2.50. But you brought some goods with you to the United States including a bicycle. Tell us about the bicycle.

>> Frank Liebermann: Well, we stayed in Cleveland until my father got word that he passed the State Boards. And Dayton was becoming a successful city at that time which did not have -- which had a -- actually had a shortage of doctors. No other Jewish ear, nose and throat specialist. Even though he had a very old practice. When he opened his practice on Valentine's Day in 1939, and that became my home until I graduated from college.

>> Bill Benson: So, when you unpacked -- when your goods arrived --

>> Frank Liebermann: Friends of friends -- and I say that in quotes, of my parents had a bicycle shop. And they said, we'll pack your bicycle to take the least room in their special bicycle boxes where you take off the handlebars and make the smallest possible package. And they delivered that to us.

And it went -- at that time you could still take out furnishings provided you paid 100% tax. In other words, whatever the value was, again, to the government. But you could get what was called the lift which today would be a container. And when we got to Dayton we opened it. And shortly after that got a letter from the friends saying --

>> Bill Benson: The ones who packed it for you?

>> Frank Liebermann: Yep. That we should very careful in opening up the bicycle. They had some forbidden gold coins which they put into the frame and put some black cloth into it to cover it. And they said, keep it for them. My father was absolutely livid. Because that, again, was a concentration camp offense. Even at that time. Even before Kristallnacht.

>> Bill Benson: Had it been inspected and found --
>> Frank Liebermann: Correct, yeah. We wouldn't have made it.

>> Bill Benson: You wouldn't have made it.
>> Frank Liebermann: But he kept those and, in fact, made necklaces which went to my wife and my two daughters and my daughter-in-law as souvenirs.

>> Bill Benson: So, I mean, they essentially had you smuggle their goods out at risk to you.

>> Frank Liebermann: At the end of the war they wanted a refrigerator. And he said you should tell them to get a refrigerator. And he sent the refrigerator. But kept that.

>> Bill Benson: Frank, I'm going to go back to I think when you were in Cleveland. You mentioned a little while ago Kristallnacht. What you call the night of broken glass, November 9-10, 1938. Tell us in Cleveland what that meant to you.

>> Frank Liebermann: On November 9th, I believe it was a Wednesday, the movies had a special 25 cent admission. And my parents went out for the first time. They asked a neighbor to look in on me once or twice. And all of a sudden at 9:00 I got a collect phone call. In those days, you could call collect because telephoning was much, much more expensive. And you could -- on a collect call you could only -- you would only pay for it when the party that it's made to accepts it.

So, this was 9:00 at night which I knew was 3:00 in the morning. And the call was from to my mother from my grandfather. My mother's father. I knew that this was a bad sign. If they called at 3:00 in the morning, something was -- something was wrong. They finally came back at 10:00. That was probably the longest hour of my life. When my mother accepted the call, they found out that the business had been confiscated.

That her two older brothers had been arrested and that they were desperate to get out. At that time my -- this was shortly after we got there. My father took the next bus to New York to appeal to the man, Charlie Marcus who had given the affidavit. And we never took a penny from him, by the way.

He, by the way, this man had a 1938 income tax return of \$38,000.

>> Bill Benson: In 1938.

>> Frank Liebermann: In 1938 which is well over a million dollars. Since he knew about the theft, that was too close.

>> Bill Benson: So, you couldn't get the affidavits.

>> Frank Liebermann: We were never able to get them out because my father wasn't able to do it on his own at that point.

>> Bill Benson: He wasn't established?

>> Frank Liebermann: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: Frank I want to -- hopefully we'll have time to come back to that. So, now you're in Dayton, your father's, you know, he passed his certification exams. He's setting up practice. Will you tell us what happened at first when he tried to start his new practice?

>> Frank Liebermann: He applied for members of the medical society. Which at that time was kind of a license to legitimacy. And after they got the application, they held an emergency meeting on Friday night.

>> Bill Benson: Emergency meeting of the medical society?

>> Frank Liebermann: Of the Medical Society. On a Friday night, which, as you may know, is the Jewish Sabbath. And passed a resolution requiring citizenship in order to gain admission. Citizenship required. We had already taken our first papers of our desire to become citizens. But it required a five-year waiting period. And obviously this was very upsetting. But the next morning he got a call at the office. He went in. He had office hours every day from basically until 5:00.

And on Saturday morning until 12:00 for people who worked all day. I mean, during the week. The reporter came in and said he would like to see my father if had time. He said, of course. And he said, I would like to see your credentials. So, he went over it. And he said, thank you very much.

Sunday morning the Dayton Herald had an editorial, "Freedom of Opportunity in the United States," indicating what had happened with an exposing of the Medical Society.

Monday morning two good things happened. First of all, he had 11 new patients.

>> Bill Benson: After reading the editorial.

>> Frank Liebermann: Second of all, we got a call from the chief of staff at the Good Samaritan Hospital offering him hospital privileges. And this really enabled him to get settled and adjusted and feel at home probably faster than almost anybody. I was just admiring my granddaughter's breath which had lemon. And one of my favorite sayings is if you get a lemon, make lemonade. The Dayton Herald made the lemonade for us.

>> Bill Benson: Did the medical society reverse it?

>> Frank Liebermann: No. He applied, and at the end, had didn't want it. He never went into Miami Valley Hospital where he felt -- where he was told he wasn't welcome.

>> Bill Benson: Frank, tell us, of course, the War began September 1939. The United States entered the War after Pearl Harbor in 1941. What happened to the rest of your family members? Did any survive? When did your -- when did your parents learn what had happened to your family?

>> Frank Liebermann: First of all, my mother's brothers, the two

older brothers, including the wife and 5-year-old daughter had secured passage to Shanghai in June of 1940. And were already on the ship in Genoa. It was an Italian ship. On the day that Italy declared war on the allies. And therefore they -- the ship couldn't get through the Suez Canal. Now, Italy declared war, it was obvious that France had fallen, and it was safe to be part of the axis.

They basically were sent back, and we didn't get knowledge of what happened until after the war. We find that the Germans were meticulous record keepers. And about five years ago they released all of the records from the concentration camps which the Museum examined and translated and we did find out that my paternal grandfather who my father was -- did manage to guess passage to Spain. Got sick on the way and rather than be hospitalized was sent -- and he died in 1940. My -- my maternal grandparents were until the end of 1943. And that was confirmed by the man who had married my grandparents and knew my mother. He survived. And they saw him in 19 -- in 1945. We also found out from the records of my mother's brothers, sister-in-law, cousin and their daughter, they never had a chance.

They all died in Auschwitz where they were in labor camp. The minute you got sick or had any problems you went to what they called medical --

>> Bill Benson: Infirmary.

>> Frank Liebermann: The clinic, infirmary. We got that confirmed through the Museum.

>> Bill Benson: Frank, your father, you explained to us, had gone to New York in the hopes to try to save family members after Kristallnacht in 1938 and he wasn't able to do so because he wasn't established and couldn't get the affidavits. But later your father played a remarkable role in saving people. Tell us about that.

>> Frank Liebermann: Well, after World War II there was a tremendous amount of displaced persons. He personally gave out hundreds of affidavits guaranteeing that they won't be -- and he was an international -- with refugees. He was in the organization. He was one of five recipients of the 75th anniversary award. Together with President Truman. He wasn't able to save his own family, but he felt he needed to do the best he could for others.

>> Bill Benson: 107. Wow. Remarkable. Frank, your mother wrote about her experience.

>> Frank Liebermann: My kids persuaded her to write an autobiography. And she called my wife into the room at a time when she had already suffered pretty severe illness. With some heavy editing and very wonderful work by my daughter-in-law, we did put it together. There are copies here at the Museum. And there are also copies within the family.

>> Bill Benson: One last question before we close, Frank. And

that is, your wife of 67 years, Marianne, passed away last August. Tell us how you met. There was a coincidence somewhere in your lives.

>> Frank Liebermann: As soon as we got to the United States we really couldn't travel. At first, we couldn't afford it. And during World War II, everybody was busy doing what they had to. My father wasn't affected by the draft because of medical requirements. But spent two days a week at Memorial Hall examining recruits. But after World War II they really wanted to get to know the United States.

And we went cross country and did -- went to 46 of the 48 states. And got to know our country very well. Part of the trip was in New England in 1947 after we had gone cross country. And by that time, I was 17. And 18, yep, 18. Excuse me. And we went through Canada, and we wanted to rest a little bit in the Adirondacks. Which was a very lively town in the winter, but very boring in summer. And my wife had been at Penn State for summer school and her parents picked her up and also wanted to rest for a week.

We were the only two people under 40 in the hotel.

[Laughter]

And that led to a new family.

>> Bill Benson: Thank you, Frank. We're going to -- I'm going to turn back to Frank in a moment to close our program. I want to thank you all for being here. We didn't have chance for you to ask Frank some questions. There were so many other things I wish we could have asked Frank about to share with us. But you have got an glimpse here, I think. After Frank finishes, though, we invite you to come up on stage. Frank will stay here for a while. And if you want to come up on stage, meet him, shake his hand, get a picture taken or ask him a question.

If you have one you would like to ask, please do so. We hope that you can come back to another "First Person" program between now and the middle of August. But I will remind you that we have all of our programs available through the YouTube page at the Museum. You can view Frank's program as well as the other programs. I hope you take advantage that have. It is our tradition at "First Person" that our "First Person" gets the last word. With that, I'm going to turn back to Frank to close.

>> Frank Liebermann: Okay. I have a few things to say. First of all, I told you about some of the tough parts of my life. At the same time, I feel I've had a chance to live the American dream. And when I took my kids back to -- they wanted to know where I came from -- I had to pinch myself how good I possibly have grown up there and the kind of society that it is now. And I've also -- I also want to say that I'm at peace with Germany. I find it's three generations. You should never blame children for the sins of their parents.

I am a great believer in what I think America stands for. Our

freedoms, our oppressed and the whole society. And I'm happy to be where I am and I'm proud to have so many of the first generation here. And I feel great about it. Thank you.

[Applause]