Holocaust Memorial Museum First Person
Marcel Drimer
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Remote CART Captioning

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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 began our twentieth year of the First Person program yesterday. Our First Person today is Mr. Marcel Drimer, whom you shall meet shortly.
This 2019 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 twice-weekly 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 program will continue through August 8th. The museum's website, at www.ushmm.org, provides information about each of our upcoming First Person guests.
Marcel 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 Marcel a few questions. If we do not get to your question today, please join us in our on-line conversation: Never Stop Asking Why. The conversation aims to inspire individuals to ask the important questions that Holocaust history raises. You can ask your question and tag the Museum on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram using @holocaustmuseum and the hashtag #AskWhy. Today's program will be livestreamed on the Museum's website, meaning people will be joining the program online and watching with us today from across the country and around the world. We invite everyone to watch our First Person programs live on the Museum's website each Wednesday and Thursdays at 11:00 A.M. Eastern Standard Time through the end of May. A Recording of this program will be made available on the Museum's YouTube page. Please visit the First Person website, listed on the back of your program, for more details.
We ask that if you can please stay with us through the full one-hour duration of our program today.
What you are about to hear from Marcel is one individual's account of the Holocaust. We have prepared a brief slide presentation to help with his introduction.
Marcel Drimer was born in Drohobycz, Poland, a small town now part of Ukraine. The arrow on this map of Europe from 1933 points to Poland. Marcel's father Jacob, worked as an accountant in a lumber factory while his mother raised Marcel and his younger sister, Irena.
In this photo we see Marcel and his mother Laura in 1934. Germany and the Soviet Union

attacked Poland in September 1939 beginning World War II. This is an historical photograph of German troops parading through Warsaw after the surrender of Poland. On June 22, 1941, Germany violated the German-Soviet Pact and attacked Soviet territory. Within a few weeks Drohbycz was occupied by German forces. In 1942, members of Marcel's family, including his grandfather, whom we see here, were deported to extermination camps where they were murdered. In the Fall of 1942, Marcel and his family were forced into the Drohobycz ghetto. This is an historical photograph of Jews being forced into the Drohboycz ghetto.

Before the liquidation of the ghetto, the family escaped to a small village. In August 1943, Marcel went into hiding with a Polish-Ukranian family. Here we see photos of Jan and Zofia Sawinski, the family who hid Marcel and his family. Marcel's family is seen in this photo taken in 1947 or 1948. From left to right, we see Marcell's uncle Abraham Drimer, his parents, Laura and Jacob, and Marcel's uncle, Abraham Gruber. In 1957 Marcel earned a degree in mechanical engineering. He immigrated to the United States in 1961 where his wife Ania joined him in 1963. Soon after arrival in the U.S. he was hired by the U.S. Post Office Department to work on the design of mail sorters and conveyors. After a very successful period with the Post Office Department, Marcel transferred to the U.S. Army as a civilian in 1972. He then worked as a mechanical engineer for the Army Corps of Engineers. Although Marcel officially retired from the Army in 1994, he remained a consultant with the Army until 2010. He is now truly retired. Ania trained as a pharmacist in Poland and continued her profession after her arrival in the U.S. and is also retired. Marcel and Ania have a son, Adam, who lives in Richmond, Virginia. They have two grandchildren, Mary and Jack. Jack is a freshman at Virginia Tech. Mary is in the 11th grade.

Marcel and Ania do considerable work as volunteers with the museum. They translate documents written in Polish including having translated portions of Emanuel Ringelblum’s Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto, a 25,000-page collection of diaries and other documents detailing the events and lives of those who lived in the doomed Warsaw Ghetto. Marcel and Ania also reviewed and transcribed several filmed testimonies and made recommendations about their potential significance for the Museum’s exhibition, “Some Were Neighbors: Collaboration and Complicity in the Holocaust,” which ended in 2017. They are quite a team. I am pleased to note that Ania is here today with Marcel.

Marcel speaks publicly about his Holocaust experience in many settings, including at numerous schools and military installations. Marcel recently donated to the Museum photographs of great significance to him as well as a ring which played a role in his survival, which we will hear more about today. And we hope to hear about a trip Marcel and Ania took to his home town of Drohobycz in 2016. Please join me in welcoming our First Person, Mr. Marcel Drimer.

Marcel, thank you so much for joining us today and for your willingness to be our First Person. You have so much to share with us that I think we'll just jump right into it, if you're OK with it. World war II began in September 1939, when Germany attacked Poland from the west followed quickly by the Soviet union attacking Poland from the east. Early in the war, you and your family lived under Russian occupation. Before we talk about that time, tell us about your family and community in Drohobycz before the war began.

>> Marcel Drimer: Well, my father was an acountant working in the lumber factory. And he was the fifth of five siblings. My mother was the fourth of four siblings. They were born in 1904, and this was -- Drohobycz was under Austria-Hungarian. And now it's Ukraine, the place that we lived.

>> Bill Benson: It's now Ukraine?
>> Marcel Drimer: Ukraine.
Drohobycz was a small town at that time. About 60,000 people lived there. About 20,000 of three different nationalities. Ukrainian, Poles, and the Jews. It was a town of people where they had their own schools. Well, actually schools were Polish when I was there. But people had their churches and synagogues, churches. And life was normal and was quite good.
>> Bill Benson: As you mentioned to us, you had a large extended family with your parents both having a number of siblings and cousins. So a large family. Marcel, on September 17, 1939, Russia attacked Poland. As a result, you would live under Russian occupation until June of 1941. What can you tell us about that time for you and your family, your community, when you were under the Russians?
>> Marcel Drimer: Well, the Russians tried to make Drohobycz a communist place.
>> Bill Benson: You were forced to go to Russian schools?
>> Marcel Drimer: Well, I was only 5 years old, but I couldn't -- I had to go to Russian kindergarten. It was -- they were trying to nationalize factories and big farms. They wanted to make it communist but they were not very -- they didn't have any success. The Russians sent out to Siberia people that they considered -- some people -- some of them were the parents of Ania. Her father was a doctor, and her mother was a similar. And they didn't want to accept the Russian papers. So they were sent to Siberia where Ania was born. '>> Bill Benson: In Siberia?
>> Marcel Drimer: Yes. In Siberia. Actually her father was a doctor and delivered her.
>> Bill Benson: Your birthday is May 1, Marcel, which is a significant date in the communist world. Tell us what is significant about your birth date, about being born on May 1.
>> Marcel Drimer: Well, actually, I was born in my grandparents' house, and there was a doctor but there was -- you know, my father had to register me, my birthday, and he went to register and then they -- he decided that May 1 was a Labour holiday and it would be nice if I was born -- oh, actually I was born on April 30. So since father thought that it would be nice that I would be born on May 1, so he registered me as May 1. But don't tell anybody. But I was officially -- I was born on May 1. My father had some -- some of his siblings were communists. And they were very happy that I was born on May 1.
>> Bill Benson: In fact, some of your uncles volunteered and joined the Russian army at the time.
>> Marcel Drimer: Well, they did not volunteer. They were lifted.
>> Bill Benson: They were drafted?
>> Marcel Drimer: They were drafted into the Russian army. This is mainly at the time when the Germans attacked them from the west.
>> Bill Benson: And then of course that would all change soon after Germany turned on the Soviet Union in June 1941. German troops occupied Drohobycz, your town. And life for Jews changed dramatically and tragically. What did the Nazis do after they took control of your town and what did that mean for you and your family?
>> Marcel Drimer: Well, first they got -- the Ukrainian nationalists contacted the Germans, and the Germans allowed them to do what they wanted to do with the Jews, with the Jewish houses. So when the Germans came to Drohobycz, the first day, actually July 1, there was an aktion, a pogrom, where they killed 200 Jews in Drohobycz and they came to the house of my randfather, maternal grandfather, and they beat him up so badly that he died within two weeks. While they beat up my grandfather, they took out some things, and among them they took out a photo albums. They took the photo albums. They were lettered and very nice, but they didn't care

about the photos. So they shook out the photos into mud, and took the albums. And after the war, my father went there to see what was left from the house, of the house, and there wasn't much, what was left, but a neighbor that came out from his house and gave my father a stack of about 100 photos. The photo of me with my mother was one of these photos.
>> Bill Benson: That had been thrown to the ground?
>> Marcel Drimer: That was picked up from the mud. Some of the photos could be used. I donated about 100 photos to the Holocaust Memorial Museum, and they are available. Some of them --
>> Bill Benson: Like the one of your grandfather, yeah.
>> Marcel Drimer: My grandfather and my mother with me.
>> Bill Benson: Marcel, at some point, you had had a nanny, and at some point when the Germans were in control, you went to stay with your nanny. That's a very important thing to share with us.
>> Marcel Drimer: Oh, yes, yes. Well, in our house, there were nine people. My mother, father, sister and I, and grandfather, my father's father, and grandmother, my mother's mother. So it was nine. But the Germans -- when the Germans came, they made some rules what the Jews can do. Well, actually, nothing they can do, they had to do. They had to give away -- if they had any arms, fur coats.
>> Bill Benson: Radios.
>> Marcel Drimer: Radios. And anything that the Germans wanted. Now --
>> Bill Benson: You were going to tell us about your nanny.
>> Marcel Drimer: So there was nine people in our house. And the Germans also had rationing of food. So these people that were with us, there was grandfather, grandmother, and with two children whose husband was taken into the Russian army. So father couldn't provide food for all these people. So my nanny would come to our house quite often and brought some food and played with me. And one day she said to my mother, you know, I see that Marcel is looking very thin. Maybe I'll take him to my house and feed him up and then bring him back. So my mother agreed. So I went to Jacia's house. And my sister was bored. She wanted to play with me. So she bothered my mother that she wants to get back -- for me to get back home. So mother agreed. Mother took off her band, her armband with the star of David. This was one of the things that the Germans had Jews to do. Another thing that the Germans had the Jews to do was Christians were not allowed to help the Jews. Helping Jews was -- you can be killed for helping Jews. So mother took my sister and she came to Jacia's house. When she came, Jacia was in bed. She was giving birth to a child. There was nobody to help her. I was sitting in the corner and crying, because I was 8 years old and I was no help. So when my mother came there, she saw what was going on. So she took -- you know, she boiled some water and did what she could to deliver that baby, which she did. But the baby was stillborn. And it became night, dark. So Jacia's asked us to stay overnight. The next morning her husband, Jacia's husband, who worked on the night shift, and he came home and he said, don't you know what's going on? The Germans are attacking the Jews. The Germans are killing the Jews. So if you would -- if they would come here and see you, we would all be killed. One thing that I didn't mention is that the Jewish men were circumcised. Only Jewish men were circumcised. So the Germans, if they would come and see that I was there, then Jacia would be killed. So she knew, Jacia's husband knew, that I cannot be there.
So he gave Mother some bread and told her to go to the -- there were some woods up the road. And there was a field. It was August, so there was weeds. So we went through the road, and my

mother didn't go to the woods but she found an indentation in the ground of the fields, and we all lie down. And Mother covered us with her coat. So we were hiding there and very soon we start -- we hear German shouting, get out, and schnell, which means right away. And then we would hear shots. The people were crying, begging. People begging for mercy. And then shots again. And this was going like every 15 to 20 minutes.
>> Bill Benson: As they are going house to house, right?
>> Marcel Drimer: Well, not only house to house. They were going through the wheat fields whenever they found people. So we called it a symphony of death, because it was like a symphony of death. So somehow they did not get us. We survived.
At that time -- well, so we got up. It was dark. Just a little, you know, dark. And so we went back to Jacia's house. As we came to the road, we looked at the right and left, and there was a German with a big dog looking at us. And we were just staying there, you know, and looking at him. And it felt like we were -- like it was hours, but it was maybe a minute or two. He just turned around and walked away. Normally the Germans did not go hiding the Jews or killing the Jews by themselves. There had to be two so that they wouldn't have a -- if one person would want to save the Jews and not do anything, the other one would make them do it.
>> Bill Benson: So if one German soldier had a little bit of a conscience and didn't want to just kill children and women, by having a fellow soldier there, that was their check for making sure it wouldn't happen?
>> Marcel Drimer: Yes.
>> Bill Benson: But he was alone?
>> Marcel Drimer: Luckily he was alone. We wondered why. But, you know, my mother was blonde and blue eyes, and my sister was blonde and blue eyes. I still have my blue eyes, but I am circumcised. So I am very dangerous very these things, you know. But we came to Jacia's house. And Jacia asked us to stay another night. And her husband who worked a night shift came back. Well, I already talked about that. So my father, the next morning, my father came to get us home. My father -- when there were aktions, the Jewish men had a place that they could sleep and eat. And so Father was there.
>> Bill Benson: Because of the war?
>> Marcel Drimer: Yes. In addition to armbands, he also had some A on his armband that he worked for the Germans. So Father came and took us, and we walked to the house, to our house. And the door of our house was open. And there were feathers flying all over the house. And the house was empty. Everybody was gone. Everybody was gone. Later after we settled a little, a neighbor told us that the Germans came by the house and passed the house, and a 14-year-old boy ran after them and said that there are some Jews in this house. So they came back and took all the people from the house.
>> Bill Benson: And you never saw them again?
>> Marcel Drimer: They were put into a place where they kept them for two or three days without food, without sanitary conditions. Terrible sanitary conditions. They were put on the train and taken to Belzec camp. There were two kinds of camps. There were killing camps and camps that they would let you work in like outfits where people were working. Very, very hard. And whenever new people came, the others -- the first ones were killed. But the killing camps, people were killed right away. So Belzec was one of the camps that killed them right away.
>> Bill Benson: And that's where your grandparents went?
>> Marcel Drimer: And this is where my grandparents were. And two children. Cousins.

>> Bill Benson: Marcel, there is so much I know you could tell us about every part of your whole story that you went through. I'm going to now ask you to tell us about being forced into the ghetto. The Germans created a ghetto in Drohobycz, and your family was forced to go into the ghetto.
>> Marcel Drimer: Yes.
>> Bill Benson: Tell us a little bit about that. Because we're going to move then to your father's decision to get you out of there.
>> Marcel Drimer: The ghetto was opened in October of '42. All the Jews had to live in the ghetto. People were crowded, terribly crowded. We got one room in an apartment maybe three or four, and there were -- in each room were families. So there was no furniture. It was all gone already. So we all slept on the mattress. The situation was very, very bad because again rations and aktion. They had aktions that they would go to the ghetto and just take the people and either shot them on the spot or take them to Belzec.
So Father tells that the ghetto will be liquidated any time soon. So he thought that we should get out of the ghetto. He prepared a place in the lumber factory where he worked for us to hide. And then there was a Polish policeman. They would come to a place in the ghetto and take the men to the places where they would work. And Father bribed --
>> Bill Benson: So they were allowed out of the ghetto to go to the workplace?
>> Marcel Drimer: Yes, but not by themselves.
>> Bill Benson: They were escorted.
>> Marcel Drimer: Yes. So Father bribed him. This policeman. It was easy to bribe him. So my father took me under his arm and my mother wore a man's clothing and took my sister under her arm. We weighted weighed very little. So Father -- we came to the place where the lumber factory was. And Father put us behind some bushes. He loosened some parts of the fence, and he asked me to stay there out in the bush and he would take mother and Irena and then he would come to take me. Well, he took -- he says you are a man. You are the man, so you will stay here. So Father –
>> Bill Benson: And you're 8 years old?
>> Marcel Drimer: Yes.So he took my mother and sister through the fence, but I was scared. I heard stories that people would abandon children. You know, I was just scared. So I got up and ran, screaming, Daddy, Daddy. And there was another policeman that was there, and so Father just took his jacket out of his arms and gave it to him. You know, I was not a man. I was a scared little boy. So we came there, and Father put us on the attic of a place that wood was drying for use. So we would -- Father would come in the middle of the night and bring some food. There was no steps, but we had a string. We would put the string down. Father would send us some food. And took down the waste.
>> Bill Benson: To be sure we all understand, your father who worked -- because the Germans controlled the lumber factory. He was allowed to work there. he found a hiding for his wife and two children in that lumber factory, and there were you hidden in there.
>> Marcel Drimer: And he couldn't work in the office. They built him -- they needed him because he was real excellent, really important person. So they built him a little hut, you know, so he could sleep there at that time. And he would -- you know, he –
>> Bill Benson: He would sneak out and bring you food at night?
>> Marcel Drimer: Right. He would sneak out, bring us food. And a friend of his came to him and told him that there is another young woman named Teresa. And she told him that she thought there was somebody hiding, and she is going to make sure that it's true, and she said I

will do what I have to do, which means notify the Germans, the Gestapo, that there are Jews hiding. The people that would do that, they would get a kilo of sugar or flour for each person that they would turn in. So Father was very upset because what to do. So he talked to a good friend that was a doctor at the clinic, in the lumber factory, and he was educated in Vienna. Perfect German. And that doctor wrote a letter to the Gestapo saying that he is an officer, a Wehrmacht officer, and that he had an encounter with Teresa and she gave him syphilis.
Well, you have to do what you have to do. So next day, the Germans came and picked up Teresa and took her to the clinic where the doctor was. And of course he said, of course, she has syphilis. You have to take her. So the Germans took her, and she wasn't to be seen until after the war. And my father, after the war, my father explained to her what happened. Hopefully she understood what happened.
>> Bill Benson: But for your father, of course, he through incredible bravery and creativity and a good friend, you were able to survive that. But at some point he knew you couldn't stay there. this is not going to work.
>> Marcel Drimer: And something that happened, happened a few months ago, I didn't even talk to you about it. I didn't know who the doctor was. We didn't talk about it. And I had a friend, somebody in Warsaw, that was doing some research. And he sends me the name of the doctor and the fact that the doctor survived.
>> Bill Benson: And that was just in the last few months you found that out?
>> Marcel Drimer: The last few months.
>> Bill Benson: Amazing. So your father is desperately searching for another place for you to go. He found a Christian-Polish-Ukrainian family, the Sawinskis, and they agreed to hide you in their home. And just getting there is remarkable, much less the time you were there.
Tell us about that.
>> Marcel Drimer: It wasn't very easy. My father would go and would take the armband off his arm. By the way, my father obviously was circumcised. And my father had Jewish nose and dark hair. So he could be, you know, very, very --
>> Bill Benson: Caught with his armband off, he was going to be shot, yeah.
>> Marcel Drimer: Yes. So Father went to the village where my mother's parents lived, and went to some farmers and they said, no, we don't want to. But some of them said, oh, you have a watch. You better give us the watch because if you don't give us the watch, we will notify the Germans that you are here. Several places, he was not very successful. But he went to the Sawinskis farm. And said, Mrs. Sawinski, he knew my mother since she was a small girl. And they were decent people. I think she was -- she couldn't write or read, but very, very good people. So Father promised that he will give them whatever he has and whatever afterwards. And so she -- Mrs. Sawinski agreed to take my mother and my sister to her farm. One day she came, Mrs. Sawinski came at night, and we were out of the attic to the place where the Jews were eating. We were sitting there, and we were saying goodbye. My father was serious. He says that we have to save anybody that could be saved. So he was ready to let Mother and Irena go, and I would stay with him. So of course I was crying. And my mother was crying. And Mrs. Sawinski was crying. And then she said at one point, whatever will be, will be. We will take the boy too. So it was very brave of her to do.
>> Bill Benson: And you describe that for your mother, it was her version of Sophie's choice. She had to leave with her daughter and leave you behind. Thank goodness Mrs. Sawinski --
>> Marcel Drimer: Mrs. Sawinski allowed. So she took us -- we didn't have anything to take

with us. We were already empty. So we went through the fields and through the woods and came to the Sawinski house. Life in the Sawinski house was not easy because the farmers also had to use -- they couldn't go and buy food. Rations. They only had whatever the rations gave them.
>> Bill Benson: In other words, if it's a family of four, they got rations for four. But now there's three other people hiding there, so the rations have to be split between seven of you.
>> Marcel Drimer: Exactly. So the youngest boy would go to a refinery, a nearby refinery, with a big container, and get the food from the scraps of the other -- the workers. Not only the Jewish workers but the other workers. So he brought that food -- well, the scraps, and we had the first choice. We could pick up what was edible. Now, my uncle, Abraham, was a butcher in that factory that he got –
>> Bill Benson: Was still allowed to work for the Germans?
>> Marcel Drimer: Yes. So he also gave him a piece of meat every once in a while. The Germans would know that he is giving away meat, they would kill him. You know, being killed was absolutely nothing. But my uncle was a very brave man, and he did it. He did it. So we would bathe once a month. There were lice and there was, you know, absolutely terrible.
>> Bill Benson: And they were very poor. And so dirt floors. Basically a small, small house. And then you're in there.so as you said, the hygiene was bad.
>> Marcel Drimer: The attic -- well, first of all, I have to tell you that after we were there, my father, it was close to the end of the war, and my father was sure that the Germans are going to kill all the Jews. So he contacted the farmers that he would -- that he would like to go there and hide. And then my uncle also, the one –
>> Bill Benson: The butcher?
>> Marcel Drimer: The butcher. He was a favorite of the Sawinskis because they were neighbors. So he also came and asked to be hidden there.
And there was some people hiding in the family of the Sawinskis but they didn't want to keep them any longer. So the Sawinskis -- so there was 13 people hiding there.
>> Bill Benson: In their little home, their little property.
>> Marcel Drimer: We would change. One group would sit under the ground, and one group would sit on the attic. There was no chimney there.
>> Bill Benson: I mean, the attic is just a space.
>> Marcel Drimer: Right. But no chimney. The smoke would come to the attic. And we would lay there and we were getting smoked.
>> Bill Benson: And then the others, was a hole in the ground?
>> Marcel Drimer: A hole. And you had to be either laying down or sitting. You couldn't stretch your legs.We would only stretch our legs when the Brits or Americans would bomb the --
>> Bill Benson: The refinery that was there?
>> Marcel Drimer: Right, right. We would come out because everybody was hiding.
>> Bill Benson: So bombs are falling. Everybody's hiding. That's your chance to go out and just get outside for a moment.
>> Marcel Drimer: Yes. Deep breath.
>> Bill Benson: And tell us what your sister said.
>> Marcel Drimer: When we first came there, we would be on the attic up there where the cows are. We looked out there, and there were chickens running around. And my sister says, why couldn't I be the chicken? I could run around. I wouldn't have to hide. But this was not -- now the farmers also were not allowed to slaughter anything. They had to notify the Germans every -- the

Germans, you know, everything had to be by their rules. So if they would want to slaughter a chicken or another animal, they would be -- it was illegal.
>> Bill Benson: So the fact they had chickens, they just couldn't use them to feed you.
>> Marcel Drimer: Right.
>> Bill Benson: At one point because there's so many of you hiding there, and conditions are so hard, your sister became pretty ill, and of course you couldn't get medical care. So tell us -- you were worried your -- your parents were worried your sister was going to die.
>> Marcel Drimer: Yes. My parents were worried and I was worried. She got bleeding from her nose, and she was very, very sick. We were worrying how are you going -- how we are going to bury her. And luckily she survived. She's a very smart engineer in Israel. And she has four -- two children and six grandchildren, all geniuses. So she survived, luckily.
>> Bill Benson: Marcel, as you were describing the British and the Americans were bombing, and the Russians are closing in. The Russians are getting there. Tell us about your liberation. There you are, 13 people hidden with the Sawinski family in this little tiny farmhouse.
>> Marcel Drimer: It was August 6, 1944. We finally -- the Soviet soldiers were walking past. And we had to start from the beginning. We didn't have anything. Everything was gone. My father became a director of the factory.
>> Bill Benson: For the Russians?
>> Marcel Drimer: For the Russians. And he was supporting the front. He gave them wood for -- because the front was a little to the west, but they still needed it. So a colonel, a Russian colonel, came to order some, and my father was sitting there barefoot. So he says, what is a director doing barefoot here? That's not right to be. And my father said, I just don't have any shoes. And we couldn't buy at that time any shoes. So they gave my father some shoes. And they also -- also Father asked for shoes for me. So I also got a pair of shoes. I wore these shoes and I messed up my feet, you know. But we survived. But it wasn't so easy. The Russians called my father to the K.G.B., the police, and they said you must have been collaborating with the Germans.
>> Bill Benson: In other words, the fact that you survived means that you must have been collaborating.
>> Marcel Drimer: Absolutely. They said you and your family survived, and that's not very often that happens. So can you imagine, after all of that, that terrible, terrible time, they would accuse him for being a survivor. But there were some Jews, other survivors, and they came and told the Russians that my father was a decent man, and he never collaborated with the Germans.
>> Bill Benson: Marcel, tell us what kind of condition you were in at the war's -- when you were liberated.
>> Marcel Drimer: When I got out, I was 10 years old. I did not go to school for a year. And I should have been in the third grade. I was in zero grade. I couldn't walk because my muscles were atrophied so badly I couldn't walk. I couldn't talk loud because we didn't talk loud for the last year or so. So I had to -- I started exercising and the teacher -- so they put me to the second grade. I didn't know -- I didn't write or read or anything, but I was 10 years old so they put me in the second grade. I managed somehow. And it was a Polish school. And then the Poles, most of the Polish people from Drohobycz left because this became -- Drohobycz became a Ukrainian republic. So they -- then they -- I had to go to Ukrainian fourth grade. And again I didn't know a word, what to saw in Ukrainian. I only learned to say I don't understand. But I was good in

math anyway. So we in 1946, we left Drohobycz and went to the territories that were formerly German, and they were towns of Walbrzych and Wroclaw. I went to college in Wroclaw.
>> Bill Benson: Under Poland?
>> Marcel Drimer: Yes. I got my degree in engineering in Poland.
>> Bill Benson: Marcel, there is something I want you to tell us about in the little time we have left. Am I correct that before the war, there were about 20,000 Jews in Drohobycz.
>> Marcel Drimer: Right.
>> Bill Benson: How many Jews survived?
>> Marcel Drimer: Immediately after the war, about 400 Jews.
>> Bill Benson: Out of 20,000?
>> Marcel Drimer: Out of 20,000. But then there came -- there came some Jews that ran with the Russian army. Some that were taken to the Russian army. And people -- some people like my wife, that the Germans -- that the Russians deported. So all in all, it was about 750 that survived.
>> Bill Benson: Marcel, in 2016 you and Ania returned for the first time to Drohobycz. Tell us about that.
>> Marcel Drimer: Well, I was quite active here, you know, in the Holocaust Museum, and I was talking at universities and high schools. And there was a young lady that was writing a story of her family. And her grandfather told her that there wasn't in their family a group -- his grandfather and grandparents were hiding some Jews, and there was the youngest Jew that survived there was a boy, and they gave her the name. So she wrote a letter to the Holocaust Museum, and she wrote a letter to the university of West Virginia. Of course they sent it to me.
>> Bill Benson: She found your name online, right?
>> Marcel Drimer: Yes. So I asked her if she has the photos of the Sawinskis, and she says of course I have the photos. So the photos that you saw here, she sent. And they are also in the Holocaust Museum. Now we found out that the Holocaust Museum got somebody sponsoring Ukrainian Holocaust survivors.
People that do --
>> Bill Benson: Research and education, right?
>> Marcel Drimer: Yes. So they -- so we asked her if she would like to come here, and she said yes, I would like to come. Because she was working on her Ph.D. and about family, and this was something very, very important for the family, for her Ph.D.
So she came here last August, and she stayed here at the Holocaust Museum for two weeks. Did very well. Learned English quite well. And she is back in Drohobycz, and we are in contact. She got married. She's pregnant. And we are friends forever. And by the way, she connected the part of the Sawinskis that lives in Drohobycz.
>> Bill Benson: Sawinskis that live in Drohobycz?
>> Marcel Drimer: The grandchildren of the adults who saved us.
>> Bill Benson: She is the great, great granddaughter of the family who saved you and she found you on line and came and stayed with you last year.
>> Marcel Drimer: When we were in Drohobycz we would walk to the places where people were killed and where the train went through with my grandparents. And the most important place was when we went to Mrs. Sawinski's place. I was crying like a baby.
>> Bill Benson: Marcel, I so wish we had another two or three hours. We don't. We have to close our program now. I'm going to turn back, however, to Marcel in just a moment to close our

program. I want to thank all of you for being with us. Remind you that we'll have First Person programs each Wednesday and Thursday until August 8. Our programs will be livestreamed through the end of May, but all of our programs will be -- you can find them on the museum's youtube channel because we film each of the programs. If you can't come back this year you can watch every program or some of them at your leisure if you want to do that. It's our tradition at First Person that our First Person has the last word. And so I'm going to turn back to Marcel to close our program.

>> Marcel Drimer: Last word. I am talking to you and others who want to listen to me because there are people in the organizations that claim that the Holocaust is a hoax. That it never happened. That the Jews made it up to get money from the Germans. I am a witness that it did happen. By listening to the stories of my childhood, you become witnesses too. Our good friend, the late Charlene Schiff, said we all have to fight the four evil I's. Intolerance, injustice, ignorance, and indifference. These are the roots of men's moral corruption that allowed Hitler and his master race helpers to come to power and torture and murder millions of people he considered not worth living. Not only Jews but people with disabilities, gypsies, homosexuals, and many other groups. Charging these behaviors -- changing these behaviors is the task to preventing Holocaust and genocide in the future.

And about indifference I would like to read you what the pastor Martin Niemoller said when he was liberated. First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out because I was not a socialist. Then they came for the trades unionists, and I did not speak out because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me, and there was no one left to speak for me.

So do we have time to answer any questions?

>> Bill Benson: Not formally. So what we're going to do is because we don't have time for questions, we're going to invite anybody among you who would like to come up onstage afterwards and ask a question to Marcel, just shake his hand, say hello, gave him a hug. We welcome that. Get a picture taken with him.

Please feel free to come up on the stage via the steps, not just up here, and visit with Marcel. So that is our formal program. Thank you all so much.