Holocaust Memorial Museum First Person
Fritz Gluckstein
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Remote CART Captioning

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>> Ladies and gentlemen, we ask that you silence all cell phones. Our program will begin momentarily.
>> 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 20th year of the First Person program, and our First Person today is Dr. Fritz Gluckstein, 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.
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 Fritz a few questions. If we do not get to your question today, please join us in our online 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. 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.
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 was taken in 1932 when Fritz was 5. He was the son of a Jewish father and Christian mother, Georg and Hedwig Gluckstein.
Georg was a judge and decorated veteran of World War I. 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. Fritz is circled in the middle of this photo of his classmates.
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 that will be explained to us in more detail by Fritz a little later. The Nuremburg 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 Gluckstein 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 judicial career. Fritz decided to immigrate on his own to the United States and arrived in the U.S. in 1948 where he studied veterinary medicine. Here we see Fritz with his mother and father after the war.
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 20 and Brielle is 17. Fritz says they are the joy of his life. 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."
Please join me in welcoming our First Person, Dr. Fritz Gluckstein.
[Applause]
>> Bill Benson: Fritz, thank you so much for joining us today and being willing to be our First Person. We'll just jump right into it because you have so much to share with us. You were a young boy when Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933. Please tell us about your family and yourself 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 and what were the early years like for you?
>> Fritz Gluckstein: Geltungsjude, as you already mentioned, my mother was not Jewish. My father was. We had to wear the star. And generally escaped the deportation. But the closer away they lived the more they were subject to the whims of the commander. If the war had lasted longer, they probably would have deported us too.
>> Bill Benson: Just so we understand, as long as one of the parents was Jewish, you were then counted as a Jew, but --

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Only if I was raised Jewish. Had I been raised Jewish, I would have been deported. But I had to wear the star.
>> Bill Benson: OK. Tell us a little more about your father. We know that he was decorated in the First World War.
>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes. He was a liberal Jew. Considered himself a German. Always flew the flag on national holidays. Even taught me how to salute the flag. And in '33, he was dismissed. And that day he had to leave and they said not by the front door. There was a group of Nazis, S.A. Officers. I came in by the front door, and I will leave by the front door. And he walked out the front door.
Actually, the moment he lost his job, immediately was fighting -- my father received a small pension because he had been a veteran. And immediately we moved to a smaller apartment. My father started to work pro bono, give advice. But I must say my aunt Dressler, my mother's sister, stood by us from beginning to end. And my mother's relatives also stood by us. However, my father's colleagues, he felt so sorry that they couldn't have any contact with us.
>> Bill Benson: Not only did he lose his job, but his colleagues cut themselves off from him.
>> Fritz Gluckstein: Absolutely.
>> Bill Benson: Fritz, you were there as a boy during the 1936 Nazi Olympics as they're known. What do you remember about that?
>> Fritz Gluckstein: Actually, shortly after '33, you already could see signs in restaurants. Jews are not welcome. The road to Palestine does not go through this town. Stuff like this. 1936, the Olympic Games, everything disappeared. You could go everywhere. They had special benches for Jews. All of that disappeared. The moment the Olympics ended, it started back up again.
>> Bill Benson: So they cleaned it up for the tourists.
>> Fritz Gluckstein: Absolutely.
>> Bill Benson: I have to ask you to tell us, though, you were a boy. And so you were up to some mischief, as I recall. Tourists would come and they would ask you as a local --
>> Fritz Gluckstein: Well, I shouldn't have done it.
[Laughter]
>> Fritz Gluckstein: A friend and I took the bus, double decker. And I said to my friend, don't – they would ask, is this is my station. And it was the completely wrong information. Pointing out as we drove by. Is that the ministry? And I'd say, no, this here is the different building. Completely confused the poor tourists.
>> Bill Benson: Fritz, during those early years of Hitler gaining power and his power growing after 1933, after the Olympics, did your parents or did your father make any efforts to try to get out of Germany?
>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes. He tried. But it wasn't so easy. Number one, there was a quota. Number two, you needed money. And number three, you had to get a visa.
>> Bill Benson: They tried.
>> Fritz Gluckstein: We all tried. But because it was quite restrictive. And even then, you needed money to get here. And as happened very often, people actually had an affidavit. And things were getting worse and worse of course. And we all tried to get out.
>> Bill Benson: You were 11 years old on the night of what we call Kristallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass, November 9-10, 1938. What do you remember about that?

>> Fritz Gluckstein: I remember leaving school and the broken windows. Second, I realized what had happened. Actually I saw the smoke. What people didn't know -- and it's still not known very widely -- how did they know what windows to break? Did they have lists? They would have to. They had to have a name of the shop. In tall white letters. I remember. Some of the teachers had been sent to the concentration camps. I remember they got the notice. Due to certain unusual circumstances, your report card will be late.
>> Bill Benson: They just referred to it as unusual circumstances.
>> Fritz Gluckstein: Actually there were some consequences. Right after that, you could not go to movies. Own a car. Can't go to concerts.
>> Bill Benson: On that night of November 9-10, which we call Kristallnacht, on that night over 300 synagogues were burned across Germany and Austria. More than 30,000 Jewish men were arrested. Thousands of Jewish businesses were destroyed and vandalized. And it was a horrible, horrible night. Some months after that, Fritz, war began. In September 1939, the following -- that year, when Germany invaded Poland. And you said to me that for you things really changed then.
>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes. Three occurrences right before the war. One, we had to have special identity cards with a big J. And when we went to a government office, we had to pull it out and announce in a loud voice, I'm a Jew. And show it. And every time we made a signature, we had to use a number. And then of course we had to take the name Israel Ignatz.
>> Bill Benson: Every Jewish male had to take the name --
>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes. And you better not forget it. If you did, you were in trouble.
>> Bill Benson: What were some of the other restrictions imposed to Jews?
>> Fritz Gluckstein: After the war came, we knew right away things were -- ration cards. Special ration cards. No white bread. No meat. We were only permitted to shop between 4:00 and 5:00 in the afternoon. There were ration cards. And then of course you had to deliver all instruments. Furs. And diamonds. They had to all be delivered right after this.
>> Bill Benson: So you had to give up valuables and radios. You also had to give up pets.
>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes, yes. Pets.
>> Bill Benson: Tell us about your dog.
>> Fritz Gluckstein: Oh, actually the dog was strange. When you gave him a snack, and you said it was from a Nazi, he wouldn't take it. But if you said it is from a Jew, he would grab it.
>> Bill Benson: And of course you had to start wearing a yellow star.
>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes, the yellow star, right. And I must say people -- it was a way to identify people. And people sometimes would come up to me and give me some special food, you know. But I should point out here the fact that if one was a party member does not mean necessarily that he was a Nazi or an anti-Semite. There was a friend who worked in an insurance company. But you were told, you join or you will never have any work. That man was my hero. But he was no Nazi at all. But he wanted to become the unit director so he joined. He shouldn't have.

And the school, I went to a great school. And the classroom teacher, home room teacher, was a Nazi member, party member. But he would treat me just like any other student.
>> Bill Benson: So he treated the small number of Jewish students like any other student, this teacher?
>> Fritz Gluckstein: Exactly. Of course, I was lucky. Not all schools were like that. But I was always lucky. Look, my name, Gluckstein, means lucky stone.
>> Bill Benson: You shared with me, Fritz, that police officers would come by with a pencil.
>> Fritz Gluckstein: You would have to have the star right up here. And it had to be really fastened tight. And the police would come and try to get a pencil behind it. And of course like that.
>> Bill Benson: Do you remember when deportations began and Jews started being deported and sent to camps?
>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes. I remember. '41, deportation. It started to be very organized. You had to report. And usually it was pretty close to when they came. And they would seal the apartment. And you had to walk to the collection point and be deported.
>> Bill Benson: And you remember that happening to some of the people that you knew?
>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes, I remember. Later on, actually it happened to my friends from school. They came in the morning -- when they didn't come in the morning, I would hope he was sick and not deported. One came back, and two survived. In hiding.
>> Bill Benson: Did your parents explain to you -- you were still a boy. Did your parents explain to you what was happening at that time or did you know?
>> Fritz Gluckstein: I picked it up.
>> Bill Benson: Yeah. You told me that also during that time, you know, the Allies started bombing Berlin, and that for you as a kid there were actually some benefits of the Allied bombing.
>> Fritz Gluckstein: Well, we had to go to a special air raid petition.
>> Bill Benson: Shelters?
>> Fritz Gluckstein: Shelter. We had to go to one that was only for Jews. And there we were sitting. On one hand we were hoping it would stop soon. It would be over. On the other hand, you hoped it would last till 1:00, past 1:00, because if it did, school started an hour and a half later, and classes would last only 35 minutes.
[Laughter]
>> Bill Benson: I think we are getting a good insight into you and your childhood. Fritz, you were able to continue in school until June 1942, and then the schools closed. After that, you went to work or were forced to go to work after that. And you had three encounters with the Gestapo. Can you tell us about them and the events that followed from those events?
>> Fritz Gluckstein: After the school closed, at first I worked at the office of the Jewish Community. My mother had some friends that had a company. A collection point. Well, what are we doing here? Well, have your son report tomorrow morning. Don't come to the central collection point. OK. Next morning, my father and I set out to collection point. It was right down the street. Well, we were there with other Jewish men. That's enough. There were some mattresses. But the collection point was guarded by regular

policemen. Under the command of an S.S. Captain Brunner. And he had forbidden us to lay down. We had mattresses, but we couldn't lay down. Why? Because police officers went around and warned us whenever the commandant would be there for the inspection. Remarkable. Had they been caught, they surely would have been sent to the eastern front.
After a few days, then the policeman came and told me, half an hour, downstairs for interrogation. My father prepared me for the police. He said don't be a hero. Don't show any signs of contempt or hostility. And he said answer the question fully but do not volunteer anything. OK. I got into the room. And there Commandant Brunner was sitting behind the desk. There were S.S. officers watching the proceedings. They tried to catch me right away. Very well. They asked me some questions. And they said we are going to give you a job. Tomorrow you will report to a special office and they will give you a spot. And I stepped outside and was surprised to see my father. And we both stepped out free. The date, January 24, 1943, my 16th birthday. I won't forget the day.
>> Bill Benson: And this officer, this Brunner, he was notorious and very powerful.
>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes. Actually he escaped to Syria. They tried to get him there later. I was lucky there.
>> Bill Benson: Uh-huh. I'm going to take you back for a minute, Fritz, to when school ended for you. Tell us what was significant about your final report card. You got that final report card when school finished.
>> Fritz Gluckstein: That final report card. Because of the dissolution of the school system.
>> Bill Benson: They dissolved the school system for Jews, and that was that.
>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes. But at that time, of course, deportation was a possibility. Most of them were deported.
>> Bill Benson: I want to talk about something you wrote in the book and you said to me. And you referred to your teachers, and you said they were everyday heroes.
>> Fritz Gluckstein: They came to work, and they still came. Actually the school was an oasis. Some of them were deported, but the professor came every day. At that timewe didn't know what they were doing. We didn't appreciate it. But now I really know what you did for us.
>> Bill Benson: One of the other encounters you had was now after school was finished for you, you were forced to work in a factory.
>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes. We were sent to a factory working there for the Air Force. Work bench. There was a good friend of mine, we sat side-by-side doing we didn't know what, but we just did it. An S.S. officer comes in. Everybody up. Took our coats. And then sent us outside. We were assessed. And the officer said, come up. Captain, I'll never forget this moment, because he used a special thing like that. Get on the truck. Two S.S. drove to town and did a roundup. There were all the tables and the chairs. We sat down on the floor. We sat there, I guess, a day or so. We were very concerned because there was children that might have been in day care or our friends or whatever, and didn't know what had happened. But after a day and a half or so, I was questioned by a very nice uniformed policeman. Not S.S. And he said you and me – this will go to this point again how fortunate I was. He and I stepped out. At the time curfew for Jews was 8:00. We're not supposed to be out in the street. We walked home anyway. My mother was with my aunt who took care of us. Ration cards had to be picked up. And I

set up to go out to get the ration cards. Oh, no. Right in front. Everyone with a star inside. And drove us all to a collection point. The collection point was a synagogue, the synagogue where I had been bar mitzvahed.
>> Bill Benson: The same sane going where you were bar mitzvahed?
>> Fritz Gluckstein: The same one, yes. And all of the pews had been removed and people were sitting on the floor. But after a couple of hours, they took me out together with other people that had non-Jewish relatives. And I was sent to another collection point downtown. And it was an administrative building of Jewish Community Center. Well, they were sitting there on bare floors. And we spent our time speculating what would happen to us. And stand in line to use the toilet or rest room. Of course, the building wasn't made up to take the influx of those people.
Now we were sitting, and of course I don't know how long we were there. It was probably 5:00 in the morning. But after about two days, go out. Released. I phoned my father. And I was released. And I had to be presented to the commandant S.S., Sergeant Schneider. And he ruined the lives of many people.
But we stepped out. But we didn't know outside there was a demonstration by the non-Jewish women who had relatives in there. The S.S. came. This was the only public question of authority the entire time. Then they let us go. But we found out later that the Minister of Propaganda was afraid of any unrest. He did not want the people to know. But particularly right after the Battle of Stalingrad. They let us go.
And we had to report again. We were assigned to gangs that clean up the after the air raids. And we went from place to place to help after air raids.
>> Bill Benson: Were you with your father on these work gangs?
>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes. In the beginning, it was a different work gangs. But in the end, we happened to be at the same. But I would say there were 20 to 30 work gangs. We had special permission to use public transportation. And mostly always good luck again. One of the fellow workers was a medic and gave me first aid. I was hit. And then they took me to hospital. It was a big hospital. The hospitals were not permitted to treat Jewish people. But the hospital took a risk on my part. And they treated me after I was shot. And I have never forgot it.
>> Bill Benson: You were, at one point, you and your father, were forced on a work detail to take on what was told to you was a catastrophic mission.
>> Fritz Gluckstein: After that, that was the last time we ran into the Gestapo. Very short.
>> Bill Benson: OK.
>> Fritz Gluckstein: We were at the time living in a small apartment. Couldn't move all of the furniture and other stuff. Stored it in the attic of a good friend. And one day I wanted to pick up something. Of course, I had the star. I had to cover it up. I couldn't go upstairs and tell people, look, I have storage upstairs. But I walk and suddenly I'm stopped. It was the Gestapo. You could tell them by their clothing. And I wondered, what is this guy doing out of uniform? Of course I could show him my identification papers. But of course he could see that there was a star. Now what? They were standing there. What would happen? He came and looked me over. Up and down. What was he doing? But I was lucky again. After a while, he just handed back my papers. And I was lucky. I was almost deported. Good luck again.
>> Bill Benson: Tell us about the catastrophic mission that you were sent on.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: This was the second time. One day, I was leaving work. Oh, stopped by the S.S. You are hereby ordered to appear for this special catastrophic mission. Report here. And what did I saw? The devil's den. Eichmann's headquarters. Head of deportation.
>> Bill Benson: This was Eichmann's headquarters?
>> Fritz Gluckstein: Eichmann's headquarters. And he needed people to clean up. And I was lucky again. My immediate supervisor was a young second lieutenant. I don't know how he got into the S.S. He was quiet and decent. And the other people were not so lucky. Some of the overseers were very nasty. Deputies and commandants. Eichmann's deputies, they had big dogs that tried to catch people to arrest who were standing there, they were blocking us. And one day I was asked to clean up in front of the building where it was guarded by S.S. Men had to run up and down. One was cursing us. And the other guy, I can still see him, small, dark face. Looked at us. Never said a thing. And whenever he found a chance he did something of importance to us over there. Obviously, he didn't want to arrest us. I still don't know how he got into the S.S.
>> Bill Benson: It's evident from what you said a couple of times that to you personally humor is important, but you said humor was really important to you at that time. If you don't mind, give us an example of as you're doing these work details, you were telling jokes to each other.
>> Fritz Gluckstein: Propaganda. There was a joke about Goebbels. Young guy talks about, oh, thank you. What can I do for you? And Goebbels says you can give me the state Fuhrer. If my father finds out I was in the river, he's going to kill me. If you can tell me which one of my eyes is a glass eye, I will let you go. He said, easy. It's the right eye. Now how did you know it? Well, it looks at you.
>> Bill Benson: The other thing you shared with me is that there you are a kid and on the work details, your father and other adults would also try to continue your education.
>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes. Young people working. Three classmates actually. The young people don't learn anything. There were scientists and others. They would ask us questions. I remember -- I don't remember what you call those things.
>> Bill Benson: A wheelbarrow?
>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes. And it had to be filled with rubble. And I had to take it elsewhere. Well, you fill it up. But you had to answer a question when I came back. I still remember what I had to do. I came back. You would give the names of the Great Lakes of the United States.
>> Bill Benson: From what you described to me, Berlin was bombed heavily. Food was scarce, and conditions became more difficult. Under those circumstances as the war came to a close, how did you and your parents continue to survive and live under those circumstances?
>> Fritz Gluckstein: Well, we did our best.
>> Bill Benson: Food must have been almost impossible to get.
>> Fritz Gluckstein: Fortunately, actually, my aunt helped. And actually food was very particularly -- it came to the point right before to use the ration cards. Went to the neighborhood grocer and asked if he had something to give out, he gave. But, yes, it was difficult. One time there was not a lot to eat.
In the beginning you could have meat. But after a while, there was nothing. Vegetables and meat. There was a horse butcher. But you could have horse meat. One of my

relatives went there and got horse meat. And somebody wondered, how could you have some of that? And he said, the butcher is very friendly. He gave me extra rations. We never knew we were eating horse meat. And it came in handy afterwards too. But that was the horse meat. Unless you know what it is, you wouldn't know.
>> Bill Benson: You wouldn't know. As the German defense in Berlin was collapsing, as it was falling apart, you said -- and again I know you want to tell us this, you said that you and your friends, as you were -- because you were building tank barriers. You and your friends figured it would take 31 minutes for the Russians to break through the tank barriers.
>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes. How long will it take for the tanks to get through? 31 minutes. Why? The tanks will come through the barriers. They will stop, and the drivers will laugh for 30 minutes. Actually, that's what really happened. We didn't do a very good job. One army -- there were two armies coming in. In the east, Marshall Konyefv. And they got into Berlin very fast. Actually the south and western part of Berlin was different. We did a little bit there.
>> Bill Benson: In fact, you said you survived because of your mother, because of luck, and because of Konyefv.
>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes, because of Konyefv.
>> Bill Benson: Because he came in so quickly.
>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes.
>> Bill Benson: Before liberation, before the Russians had occupied, you were forced on yet another work detail right at the end of the war. And this was to build the new Berlin for the Nazis. Say something about that.
>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes. Actually one day you are now -- it was always a different point. But building for a new Berlin after the war. This was 1942. And there was several of us. And we had to do our demolition part.
>> Bill Benson: You shared with me that as the Russians were occupying coming in, there was a point where you genuinely knew that you were safe from the Nazis. When was that point?
>> Fritz Gluckstein: Oh, yes. We were watching them come in. And one day we were walking close to the S.S. barracks. And what did we see? A long line of trucks pushed by S.S. men. We were so delighted. We realized the S.S. don't have any gasoline. It's the end of the Third Reich. It must surely be near. I knew it was the end.
>> Bill Benson: I have read and many people in the audience may have too accounts of what it was like in Berlin right after the Russians occupied it. How were you treated by the Soviet troops?
>> Fritz Gluckstein: What?
>> Bill Benson: How were you treated by the Soviet troops? Did you have any interaction with them?
>> Fritz Gluckstein: We were lucky. The troops unfortunately didn't behave very well. But I was lucky in fact because when the Russians came, I was out in time to get some food, of course. We didn't have to starve any more. And I went back to our apartment house. And there I saw my parents. And the people that still lived there. The Russians have arrived. And what happened? Fortunately one of our fellow neighbors spoke Russian.
>> Bill Benson: So they were suspect that you were --

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Absolutely.
>> Bill Benson: Just trying to get away as former Nazis?
>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes. Well, of course, they could call us a false star or something. But they were suspicious.
>> Bill Benson: Did you -- your father or others who survived, the other Jews that survived, did you consider getting some kind of revenge at that time?
>> Fritz Gluckstein: No. No. When the time came, no. We wouldn't lower ourselves to those level. The people that arrested us, standing there watching, that we didn't do anything like that. No, there was never -- but no, we didn't.
>> Bill Benson: What were conditions like once you were liberated after the war? Berlin was a ravaged city. What were the conditions like for you and your family?
>> Fritz Gluckstein: The Russians were occupying. They took charge of the administration every month. If you get black bread, it was Russian. If you got white bread, it was western. And food was scarce. And our apartment house, and our house, in the suburbs. There were potatoes. There were tomatoes. And we got by.
And it was a very cold winter. The water line froze. We were close to the woods so we could get some. But in the city, there was no water and food. But the pipes broke. The toilets couldn't be used. If you lived outside, you could bury your waste. But in town, it was more difficult. People would have wrapped paper or something. Use the park. Or the gardens. It was cold. But once it got thawed, you can imagine what it was like.
And then of course food was rationed. But we were lucky. We got care packages from friends and care package had everything from toilet paper to cigarettes. And cigarettes were the most important. The currency was cigarettes. If you had cigarettes, you could get anything.
>> Bill Benson: It was like currency.
>> Fritz Gluckstein: Right. Lucky Strikes were like currency. But I remember that when I came here, on the boat, ladies and gentlemen, once you step off of the boat, a cigarette is just a cigarette. I thought that was awful. I brought so many cigarettes. But you didn't need it. One more thing. Coffee. Coffee grounds were used three or four times. And then you had the coffee grounds and they disappeared. We had never seen instant coffee.
>> Bill Benson: You came to the United States several years after the war, 1948. Tell us how you -- what made you come to the United States, how did you decide that, how did you get here, and then what does your parents decide to do?
>> Fritz Gluckstein: I had to go back to school. It was difficult. After a while, I decided, well, I think I -- things were getting slowly better. But I felt that the future for me might be in the United States. And I applied for immigration. I had sponsors. The joint committee. And my parents let me go. My father was back on the bench.
>> Bill Benson: He was able to resume being a judge?
>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes. And the time counted for his retirement. He said, I'm 60 years old. What can I do? I can't practice law. The law is completely different over there. Based on English law. Here it's based on German law. But you go. But I hope you will take a profession that is not limited to one country, like law. And so I did.
>> Bill Benson: You told us about your 16th birthday when you were interrogated by Brunner, this terrible S.S. officer. How did you celebrate your next significant birthday, your 21st birthday? You were on board a ship, right?

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes. I was 21 on the boat to the United States.
>> Bill Benson: I know we don't have time to get into many other things, but I did want to ask you a couple of questions. We had several photographs from when you were young. We didn't get a chance to talk about it. But you lost several homes. They were bombed out completely. How did you end up with those photographs?
>> Fritz Gluckstein: Relatives. After the war, they came and said, let me give you these photographs.
>> Bill Benson: And I wanted to ask you about your memoir. What has it meant to you to write your memoir? What has this meant to you to be able to write this book?
>> Fritz Gluckstein: Oh, I thought it might be of interest what happened.
>> Bill Benson: There are many more details in here, as you can imagine.
>> Fritz Gluckstein: My good wife, Maran, more or less insisted that I write it. She said it might be of interest. And I said, OK.
>> Bill Benson: I'm glad you did.
>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes.
>> Bill Benson: We're going to hear from Fritz again in just a minute to close our program. As I think you probably can guess, we only got the surface of most of what Fritz went through. I'd love -- I wish he could tell us about how he got himself established here, what he did, how he met his wife. But all of that can come later. Anyway, thank you for being here.
We want to let you know that we will have programs for the next two weeks until we close our program on August 8. All of our programs are -- you're able to view them on our YouTube channel. We hope that you'll be able to watch other programs if you wish. And hope you'll put us in your thoughts for coming back in 2020, as we'll resume again next spring. It's -- before Fritz finishes, I want to mention that when he's done, we'll get him upstairs and he's going to sign -- he is available to sign copies of his book if you're interested. And a chance to chat with him too if you wish.
It's our tradition at First Person that our First Person has the last word. And so with that, I'm going to turn back to Fritz to close today's program. Your last word, Fritz. What do you want to close with?
>> Fritz Gluckstein: I was very fortunate to have come to the United States. And forever grateful for the help I received and the opportunity given to me. I value my U.S. citizenship very highly. Friends often ask what I have learned from the United States. Well, the answer is very simple. Carpe Diem. Seize the day, and don't trust the next one. And if you have two bottles of wine, drink the better one first.
[Laughter]