

UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM
FIRST PERSON: CONVERSATIONS WITH HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS
FIRST PERSON JULIUS MENN
Thursday, May 18, 2017
11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

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, host of the museum's public program *First Person*. Thank you for joining us today. We are in our 18th year of the *First Person* program and our First Person today is Mr. Julius Menn whom you shall meet shortly.

This 2017 season of *First Person* is made possible by the generosity of the Louis Franklin Smith Foundation with additional funding from the Arlene and Daniel Fisher Foundation. We are grateful for their sponsorship.

First Person is a series of conversations with survivors of the Holocaust who share with us their firsthand accounts of their experience during the Holocaust. Each of our *First Person* guests serve as a volunteer here at this museum. Our program will continue twice weekly through mid-August. The museum's website, www.ushmm.org, provides information about each of our upcoming *First Person* guests.

Julius 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 for you to ask Julius some questions.

The life stories of Holocaust survivors transcend the decades. What you are about to hear from Julius is one individual's account of the Holocaust. We begin with this photo of Julius Menn as a young boy. He was born in 1929 in the Free City of Gdansk, now Gdansk, Poland.

Julius and his parents and younger sister emigrated to Palestine. The family traveled back to Poland to visit relatives over the summer holiday. At the end of the summer, the family did not return to Palestine. Pictured here are Julius, his sister Bella, and their governess in Warsaw, Poland, in 1938.

Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. Shortly after the invasion, the Menn family fled eastward. On this map of Poland, the arrow shows the route the Menn family took, beginning in Bialystok. They traveled with other refugees for two weeks in the forests and fields of eastern Poland, eventually making it to Molodeczno, a major railroad junction. The arrow ends at the approximate location of Molodeczno.

From there, a young Soviet officer helped the Menn family get a train to Vilnius where they lived in the ghetto for a year. In the fall of 1940, Julius' father, David, managed to get four out of a total 300 transit visas that had been issued by the Soviet Union. The Menn family

traveled to Odessa and from there took a ship to Turkey and eventually to Palestine, arriving in Tel Aviv in October 1940. The Menn family is pictured here in Tel Aviv in 1945. Julius is on the right.

Julius served in the Haganah, the Jewish Defense Force in Palestine, as a teenager and later as a junior officer. In 1947, Julius moved to the United States to attend university but he returned to Israel in 1948 to serve in the Army in the War of Independence. Here we see Julius as an officer in the Israeli Army.

We close with this photo of the dedication of Julius' father's Shimshon cement factory. At the table speaking is Julius' Uncle Nachum Menn. Next to the table, on your right, on the screen, is Julius' father, David. Seated at the table is Golda Meir, former prime minister of Israel.

In 1950, Julius emigrated to the United States and continued his education. Julius and his wife, Dianne Sagner, live in Hadley, Massachusetts. He earned his Ph.D. from the University of California at Berkeley and had a long career as a toxicologist specializing in a number of areas including crop protection and the biochemistry of pesticides. After spending 27 years in private industry, he became Associate Director of the Plant Sciences Institute at the United States's Department of Agriculture Research Service in Beltsville, Maryland. He published over 125 scientific papers throughout his career and traveled internationally extensively, including 30 trips to the Soviet Union as a member of the USA-USSR Research Team on Pesticide and Environment. Julius won numerous research awards during his research career.

While Julius retired from the USDA Department of Agriculture in the mid-1990s, he continued work in his field for 10 years as an international consultant, including with the USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service. In this capacity he spent considerable time in Hanoi, Vietnam, and Turkmenistan. Together Julius and Dianne have four children and grandchildren. And Dianne is with Julius in the front row today.

Julius volunteers at the museum's archives where he's been actively translating documents for researchers for the past 11 years. He has translated from Hebrew handwritten newspapers from Eritrea, where the British imprisoned Jewish Freedom Fighters and helped to compile a now completed massive encyclopedia of the Holocaust. Julius also translated and edited memorial books which remember and honor Jewish residents of towns and cities who were martyred during the Holocaust. He did this for over 120 towns and cities and villages. Most of his translation is from Hebrew but he also translates Polish and Yiddish.

Julius speaks frequently about his Holocaust experience in various locations such as schools and synagogues. Now that he is in Massachusetts, he is part of the Speaker's Bureau for the northeast branch of this museum. He has lectured in such places as the University of Massachusetts and recently to several hundred students at Bristol College, near Boston. In the Pioneer Valley area, where he lives now, he is leading seminars in philosophy. He is also auditing courses at Amherst College.

Julius published his memoir titled, "Waves, A Memoir", which chronicles his first 21 years from 1929 to 1950. After today's program he will sign copies of his book, which is also available in the museum's bookstore and through Amazon and other book outlets.

With that, I'd like to ask you to join me in welcoming our First Person, Mr. Julius Menn.
>> [Applause]

>> Julius Menn: Thank you. Thank you very much, Bill, to your kind introduction.

>> Bill Benson: We want you to be comfortable so we're going to be seated.

>> Julius Menn: Hello, everybody. I'm very happy to be here to talk to you today. Can you hear me?

>> Yes.

>> Julius Menn: Good. First of all, I want to thank the sponsors of this program and also Bill for enabling me to talk to you. I want to share with you my experience in part as an accidental survivor of the Holocaust.

>> Bill Benson: Julius, you want to make yourself comfortable?

>> Julius Menn: Bill will ask me questions and then I will answer.

>> Bill Benson: Julius, you described your early years as a wonderful life. Tell us about your family and you in your life before you moved to Palestine.

>> Julius Menn: I was born in Gdansk. Gdansk was a city, state, that was established by the League of Nations. It had a very liberal constitution. It was semi-independent. Its foreign policy and Army were Polish. Poland was defending it but it really was German.

My father was a very successful lumber merchant. And he also, through this lumber business, met my wife -- I mean, met my mother. Her father had a factory in Bialystok and big forests near Vilna, which now is the capital of Lithuania. That whole area were the forests were is now Belarus, which is another country.

>> Bill Benson: Julius, your father had served in the Russian Army. Is that right?

>> Julius Menn: Yeah. My father was a soldier. He was born in Kiev, which is now the capital of the Ukraine. He fought on the Austrian front. The Russian Army was very poorly equipped, and he lost his toes on one leg because of the cold weather and inadequate clothing.

>> Bill Benson: Why did he move from Russia to Poland?

>> Julius Menn: Well, he escaped -- there was a lot of uncertainty in the Ukraine at that time. And remember, the Soviets were taking it over. It was a very bad time. So he escaped to Poland. Poland was fighting for its independence against Russia. He got a fictitious birth certificate from a fictitious village that made him 10 years older this way he didn't have to serve in the Polish Army. And he escaped to Gdansk. As I said, many Jewish intellectuals went to Gdansk. In fact, there were two Ambassadors in Washington from Israel. One of them was my childhood playmate. I forget his name. But anyhow.

>> Bill Benson: Julius, in 1935, when you were 6, your family then moved to Palestine. Tell us why your family moved to Palestine and tell us about your years in Tel Aviv at that time.

>> Julius Menn: Yeah. I'll sit down. I have a very bad leg. I'm almost 90 years old.

What was your question?

>> Bill Benson: Your family moved from Poland to Palestine when you were 6. Tell us about the move, why they moved to Palestine, and what it was like when you were there.

>> Julius Menn: He was a great Zionist. He always wanted to live in Palestine. So in '35, we went, my mother, father, and little sister and the German governess, who was Catholic, who was willing to go with us. It's very interesting. I really see her as my alter mother. She taught me a lot of Catholic catechism that I used to say at night before I went to sleep. Unfortunately she went back with us to Poland -- I'll come to that story -- in '35 -- in '38 and during the war she was killed in the bombings in Berlin.

>> Bill Benson: When you moved to Tel Aviv, you started school there. What was school like for you then in those years?

>> Julius Menn: Well, we got to Tel Aviv, it was a very nice city of about a quarter million people. For example, it was right on the Mediterranean Sea. It was on the sea. Even if you were in the first grade, it was extremely safe. So children could walk to the beach. I used to go

to the beach when I was in first grade and take a bath in the ocean, in the Mediterranean, and then walk home. Burglaries were unknown. People wouldn't lock their houses. It's certainly changed today but in those days it was very nice.

When I enrolled in first grade, I didn't know any Hebrew. It was a Hebrew school. The teacher was telling the kids -- she was reading them "Robinson Crusoe". Fortunately she spoke German. So I would ask her to translate for me the story, so she would. And within three months I learned Hebrew. When you're a child, it's easy to learn a language.

>> Bill Benson: In 1938, you had been in Tel Aviv for three years, but in 1938 --

>> Julius Menn: Well, I was very happy living in Tel Aviv. The German governess essentially took care of me. My parents traveled a lot. I was very happy with my friends and school. To go to Poland, it was a terrible idea.

You must project yourself -- I see we have a lot of students here. You must project yourself when you were 10 years old. That's when I was forced to go to Poland. My mother wanted to visit her family and my father still had the business in the port city near Gdansk. So he wanted to sell it. That's why we went in '38. Obviously it was the clouds of war were there.

>> Bill Benson: And when you went, it was intended to be just a short stay but it didn't work out that way.

>> Julius Menn: Yes, just for the summer.

>> Bill Benson: Why did you not come back at the end of summer?

>> Julius Menn: My father had difficulty selling and my mother forgot about going back. She had such a good time at her mother's. My mother, when we moved to Palestine in '35, she was only 31 years old, and to live in Palestine where in Gdansk she had servants and Tel Aviv she had to do everything by herself.

>> Bill Benson: So she was enjoying being back in Poland. And your father was not able to sell the business.

>> Julius Menn: Yeah. So we came back to Warsaw and I had to enroll in a Polish public school. I went one year to that school and I had to learn Polish.

Now, you must imagine, especially the kids in the school, suppose you had to move to, say, Mexico. You had to learn Spanish. You had maybe a different religion, a different way of life. This is basically what I confronted in Poland. All the Poles were Catholic, but -- there was no separation of state and religion like we have in the United States. In the first hour it was devoted to catechism. So those who were not Polish kids had to leave the classroom and wait in the hallway. Those of us who were Jewish, this was first time I really learned about discrimination. So this year passed and I learned Polish.

>> Bill Benson: Julius, in that time, you went there in the summer of '38, stayed more than a year. Now we're into the middle of 1939. You mentioned there was threats of war. Were your parents worried about war, to your knowledge? And was that --

>> Julius Menn: As a child, I don't know. I was just angry that we didn't go back. That summer of '39, I spent it at my grandmother's little place in the woods. She taught me how to collect mushrooms so not to be poisoned and berries. That was very enjoyable. I played Tarzan in the forest. I had a little knife. It was very enjoyable summer, I must say. Unfortunately we still didn't go back.

Well, I must say -- I keep forgetting that that summer we went to -- that map isn't here anymore. We went to a resort that was very close to East Germany and very close to Bialystok. Bialystok was close to the German border.

>> Bill Benson: So September 1, 1939, Germany invades --

>> Julius Menn: I was in the summer resort. September 1, the Germans attacked Poland. I remember the Germans took planes, were diving down. They had a special noisemaker. They were machine gunning the people.

>> Bill Benson: Do you remember that personally?

>> Julius Menn: Yes. We were able to escape to Bialystok through some friends who had a car. They took us. My father was in Warsaw. So my mother went to Warsaw.

It's interesting. Warsaw survived for two weeks being besieged by the Germans before it collapsed. So my mother was very lucky she found my father and they came out on one of the last trains back to Bialystok.

My father said we cannot stay here so he found -- now, remember, this was 1939, a long time ago. He found my late grandfather's coachman. And that coachman came in the morning. It must have been the 3rd of September or so. He came with a buggy, just like the pioneers who went west, that had straw in it and a canvas top. We climbed into the buggy and we went into the Polish forests.

>> Bill Benson: And tell us about that trip. You spent two weeks trying to go through the fields and forests.

>> Julius Menn: I spent two weeks in the forest. What saved us as we were traveling -- it wasn't very far. We wanted to go to Vilna. My mother thought that her mother would be there. She had a house there also.

The two weeks you can ask what did you eat for a week, first week. We ate apples. We ate apples because Poland has a lot of apples and there was nobody to pick them because the soldiers -- I mean the farmers were in the Army. And the same thing, nobody to harvest the wheat, which was very tall. The roads were filled with refugees who would also eat. Every time the stukas appeared, we would jump into the wheat field and the tall wheat protected us.

>> Bill Benson: And the stukas were the German dive bombers, right?

>> Julius Menn: Dive bombers, yeah. We were lucky to come back to the cart. There were pieces of humans and animals, and blood all over and smoke from cars, etc. It was terrible.

One of the questions often I'm asked is was I afraid. Well, I think as a 10-year-old, you can only be afraid for a few minutes. You can be afraid when the stuka was diving and machine gunning the people. I was afraid, as I remember. But long-term fear is an anxiety that usually visits people but not children.

>> Bill Benson: So after two weeks of going through that --

>> Julius Menn: The second week we found farms that had a lot of eggs. So my father bought the eggs. But we had to eat raw eggs.

>> Bill Benson: So after two weeks you made it to --

>> Julius Menn: Only dogs can eat them.

>> Bill Benson: You were forced to eat them. But you made it to Molodeczno after two weeks. What happened once you got to Molodeczno?

>> Julius Menn: Oh, when we got to Molodeczno, which was a railroad junction, the coachman said I have to go back to Bialystok. So he left us on the platform and we were standing there and didn't know what to do. We heard this rumble. And then pretty soon it became louder. And those tanks appeared. And we were convinced that they were German but they had the Soviet star, the red star. So we knew that nobody's going to kill us instantaneously.

This Russian young officer came on the platform. He liked my little sister. He would give her chocolate bars. Then he asked my father where we are going and we said -- he said

we wanted to go to Vilna. The officer said, "Are you Jewish?" And my father said yes. And the officer said, "I'm Jewish also." So he put us on a military train. Molodeczno is not very far from Vilna, maybe 100 miles. We came to Vilna, which is a rather large city. My grandmother wasn't there so we went to one of her farms in a village that was not far from Vilna. We spent there about two weeks.

My achievement as a 10-year-old was I learned how to ride a cow.

>> [Laughter]

>> Julius Menn: I must tell you, it's very difficult to ride a cow.

Anyhow, we came back to Vilna. I had to go to fifth grade. I had to learn Lithuanian. Because Lithuania occupied Vilna. It's a very strange language, a very difficult one. It's not similar to Polish at all. Also, I had to learn Lithuanian history, which I still remember some of it.

In the meantime we lived in a terrible place, in an all Jewish ghetto. My parents managed to rent a room from a family. At night the rats would come out through the rafters. The Soviets who occupied -- I don't want to go into the history because it's very complicated. I went to this Jewish school. It was a public school called Tarbut. There were so many Jews in Poland; there was a network of schools. It was very interesting. It was a school where all the subjects except the language of the country, which was Lithuanian, and the history, were taught in Hebrew. I liked the students very much.

My father had basically no money. I would go after school with one of the students to his home. His name was [Indiscernible]. His father was a lawyer. So he was rather wealthy. He had a radio that he could listen to the BBC. I had to go back to the ghetto and tell my father the summary of what the news were.

>> Bill Benson: As you said, the conditions where you were living were really, really tough conditions. You had rats in there. You told me that food was very meager. And it was also terrifically cold. You were very cold. It was a cold winter.

>> Julius Menn: Oh, yeah. Vilna is very far north and it's very cold in the winter. I didn't have any warm clothes so my mother used to rub my legs with animal fat because otherwise I would freeze. I had to walk half an hour to the school.

Eventually -- if we had money, we could fly to Sweden. And from Sweden we could go anywhere. Because Sweden was a neutral country.

Actually, my father found an old friend of his in the capital of Lithuania, which was Kaunas at that time. This man gave my father about \$5,000. It was a lot of money in those years. Certainly like \$50,000 today. So my father was able to get for our family transit visas to the Soviet Union. There were only 300 Jews who came this way on a transit visa to the Soviet Union.

What I remember might interest you. We came to Moscow by train. It was the winter of 1940, before the attack of the Germans on the Soviets. They put us up in a hotel --

>> Bill Benson: Julius, before you go there, I just want to have you share one thing that you told me. Because it was so cold in Vilna and you wore short pants to go to school, tell us what your mother would do to keep you warm.

>> Julius Menn: Oh, I said. Yeah, she would put animal fat.

>> Bill Benson: She would coat you in animal fat on your legs to keep you warm. Goose fat, right?

>> Julius Menn: Yeah. It's interesting. The Soviets, how they attracted children, especially. They showed movies outdoors free. We loved it.

>> Bill Benson: So as you were starting to say, Julius, there were only 300 transit visas issued. Your family got four of them. So you set out on a train trip through the Soviet Union to make your way to Palestine.

>> Julius Menn: Yeah. Overnight in Kiev my father had half of his family that were still in Kiev but he didn't want to see them because the Soviets would arrest him. In the Soviet Union you couldn't have any contact with foreigners.

So in Moscow, we were at a royal hotel, which had glorious days. This was like a Kafka. There was a chandelier in the dining room. It was covered with cobwebs. There were satin curtains that were torn. There were waiters that had old tuxedos on. And in the dining room we were only guests. We saw the menu. It was a book but the waiter said, no, no, we don't have any of these. We just have stew.

>> Bill Benson: So he gives you the menu with lots of items but he says we only have stew.

>> Julius Menn: Yeah. So after three days we continued. One of the waiters said to my father there won't be any food on the road because on the train they don't have food. So my father and this waiter made a barter trade. My father gave him two silk ties and the waiter gave us a cooked goose.

>> Bill Benson: That was to be your food on the train. Right?

>> Julius Menn: Yeah. There was none. In Europe it's very common on holidays to eat goose instead of turkey. Yeah.

>> Bill Benson: So he gave him two silk ties for the goose to take with you on the trip. So then you take off from Moscow. Tell us about the trip from Moscow. Where did you go?

>> Julius Menn: We went from Moscow by train. We wanted to go to Odessa, which was on the black sea. Some of the naked tribes, one of them, they camps on the railroads. They had built a fire, so the train had to stop. So fortunately we had that goose.

When we came to Odessa, they confiscated fur coats, my little sister had a little gold ring, they ripped it off her finger. They took everything away. My grandfather had a big stamp collection. And I ripped the stamps out before we left and put them in a big box, so they confiscated it. My father pleaded with the official and the official said, "Tell your son he can stick his hand in that box without looking and whatever he can pull out with his hand he can take."

So we went on a Soviet ship, overnight basically, to Constantinople. We went from the train to the Syrian border. It's rather a long trip.

>> Bill Benson: You shared with me --

>> Julius Menn: Picked up a lot of bed bugs.

>> Bill Benson: I was going to ask about that. A lot of bed bugs on the train.

>> Julius Menn: We had to go first class. From Syria, Lebanon, we went to Palestine. My father lost everything, basically in the war. We lived in a small apartment.

>> Bill Benson: You're back in Tel Aviv now. You're almost 12.

>> Julius Menn: And the war continued because the Germans and Italians would bomb -- they tried to bomb Haifa, the refineries, in the north of the country. And if they missed the refinery, they would drop their bombs on Tel Aviv because they couldn't go back to their base it would be too heavy. They didn't have enough gasoline. So every night almost for a while we all had to go down to the shelter. After a while I refused to go and I stayed in bed. I said if I'm going to die, I'm going to die. Whatever it meant.

As Bill described, I joined the Haganah, the Defense Forces, when I was 15. When I was 17, I went to officers training course. And the most eventful thing that happened to me

there, there was a candidate, a girl, from the Vilna school who survived the ghetto uprising in Vilna. There was an uprising. They were all killed, but she managed to escape. And when I saw her, it was one of the most emotional moments in my life. I gave her a big hug. And I still remember it. I described it all in my book in much greater detail. But I look forward to your questions.

>> Bill Benson: Before we get to that, a few more questions from me, if you don't mind. You're 12 years old, back in Tel Aviv. You started to tell us about the resistance movement. Palestine was under British control at that time.

>> Julius Menn: We were a British colony.

>> Bill Benson: So there were several resistance movements going on.

>> Julius Menn: The Arabs wanted their independence. The Jews wanted theirs. Basically, the Jewish community was run by the communal settlements, Kibbutz. They were mostly leftists. Today Israel is very right wing. But in those days, the leader of the country -- they were labor people.

>> Bill Benson: As you said to us, of course the war is still going on and these Jewish resistance groups were making plans that they might have to fight the Germans if Ramallah was to come into Palestine.

>> Julius Menn: Yeah, because, remember, he was already in Egypt. We thought the German forces would eventually move to Palestine. And the underground made plans for the people to escape to the mountains. Fortunately it didn't come to it.

>> Bill Benson: But you became active in the Haganah at age 15. What does that mean to join the Haganah? What did you do? What did that mean to you?

>> Julius Menn: Ok, when I was 15, once a week I had to go to a remote school. And in that school, under the floor, they had an artificial cover, they would take out handguns, various armaments that we learned how to use.

Also, as a 15-year-old, I was involved -- we would plaster the walls with illegal pamphlets that would say to the British that they would have to leave. It was somewhat dangerous because if you were caught by the CID, the Criminal Investigate Division of the British police, they would beat you on the kidneys with a metal rod that was covered with rubber. This would leave no outside injuries but it would destroy your kidneys.

>> Bill Benson: And you're 15 years old and you're taking these risks?

>> Julius Menn: Yeah. When I was 16 or so, from an older class, a girl was killed by a tank. And then when I was in the Army -- first of all, as Bill described, I came to Berkeley by myself. I basically, you might say, escaped from my mother.

>> Bill Benson: Before you go there, you mentioned earlier the Kibbutz. Before you came to the United States, you had gone to work at one of the Kibbutzes, right? You told me an incident about being out in the fields, I think with tomatoes, and you got news about the end of the war in the Pacific.

>> Julius Menn: Yeah. It was customary in Palestine that in the summers high school students would go to a communal settlement to help out with the farm work. I spent many summers, several summers, in different communal settlements. This one we had to remove stones from fields that were never used. And this person came out, said the war is over with Japan because of the atomic bomb. I didn't know what the atomic bomb was. But when it said it killed 100,000 people, whatever it was, it was scary.

>> Bill Benson: What was -- with the war over and now some Jews were able to survive in Europe and they're coming to Palestine, what do you remember from that time right after the war? What was it like in Tel Aviv? Or in Israel, more generally.

>> Julius Menn: Well, there was no Israel yet.

>> Bill Benson: Palestine.

>> Julius Menn: Remember, in '48 it was created. Basically Tel Aviv was the same except it became a much bigger city. When I was 18, after one semester in Berkeley, I went back --

>> Bill Benson: Before you tell us that, how did you make the decision to go from Palestine to Berkeley, California, to go to school?

>> Julius Menn: Well, there were several generations of students who went to school in California, in Berkeley and Davis. And they told me the climate is good, easy to find a job, and the university was very inexpensive.

To give you an idea how much I paid at the university, \$60 was for the hospital and so on, and then \$600 per semester. And there were two semester as a year. And you could take as many units as you want. That was more or less the norm. I know that today it is crazy.

>> Bill Benson: How did your parents feel about you going to California, to the United States, much less to California, on the other side of the United States?

>> Julius Menn: As I said, the climate was good, you could find a job, education was inexpensive, it was really paradise.

>> Bill Benson: So it's paradise. You're in the United States. But you weren't there long. You went back.

>> Julius Menn: I went back. I was in the Army almost two years. In 1950, two weeks after I got out, I was on a ship to go back to Berkeley.

>> Bill Benson: I want you to share with us a story you told me. When you left Berkeley the first time to go back for the War of Independence, you went back and --

>> Julius Menn: I wanted to leave some time.

>> Bill Benson: We do. I have one more question for you. So tell us about when you got to New York, there was a dinner or a party thrown for you before you're going back to Palestine to fight in the War of Independence. Tell us about that.

>> Julius Menn: Oh. There were these people in the Bronx who invited me to a party. I went. And there were all kinds of Jewish veterans from World War II, and they wanted to give me all kinds of weapons to take back.

>> Bill Benson: So this party, all these people bring out their weapons to take with you.

>> Julius Menn: It was very moving. But I could only take one.

>> Bill Benson: So you served in the Army for two more years. You fought in the War of Independence. What was that like for you?

>> Julius Menn: Well, the Army was crazy. Each one had different uniforms. As you know, they beat the Arab armies. It was a miracle. There were several thousand survivors of the Holocaust who arrived. Many of them were drafted immediately, without any training to fight in the War of Independence.

The British, in the meantime, remember, they gave up. So May 15, I think, when the British gave up, the mandate. And the 7th the Arab armies attacked. Somehow this small Jewish Army succeeded in defending itself. I had good friends who were killed in that war. And I often think about them.

>> Bill Benson: Once Israel had its independence, you returned to Berkeley and completed your education and began your new career.

There's many other things I'd like to ask you but let's do turn to our audience and see if they have questions for you.

>> Julius Menn: Thank you very much.

>> Bill Benson: We have a microphone in each aisle. We're going to ask that you wait until the microphone is handed to you if you have a question. Please make your question as brief as you can. I will repeat the question just to be sure that we hear it properly up here before Julius responds to it.

It's a little hard for us to see because of the glare of the light, so help us out. Let us know -- I have one right in the front row and one in the middle here. You're going to come down to the front. I think there's one back up here, too.

Yes, you're right here. I'll repeat the question, yes.

>> [Question Inaudible]

>> Bill Benson: You learned so many languages, then came to the United States. When did you learn English?

>> Julius Menn: Well, I knew a little bit from school but in Berkeley -- I understood what the professor would say but in some courses I couldn't write my notes in English so I wrote them in Hebrew.

>> Bill Benson: It's pretty hard to keep track of all the languages that he knew. Right?

Ok. Do we have one back here? We had one right here. Right in the middle. There we go. You go ahead, please.

Thank you, Emily.

>> [Question Inaudible]

>> Bill Benson: The question is -- for you in your childhood, what do you think was the hardest ordeal for you?

>> Julius Menn: The hardest thing was to give up my friends to go overseas again. Some of those friends I never gained back. That was very difficult.

>> Bill Benson: And a lot of this was when you left Palestine to return to Poland, right? Yeah. Ok.

All right. Thank you.

We have one here and then one back there.

Yes, sir?

>> [Question Inaudible]

>> Bill Benson: Have you returned to Tel Aviv or Israel recently?

>> Julius Menn: Not in the last 10 years because I'm opposed to this government. But 10 years ago, or so, I organized a symposium in my field. That was very nice.

>> Bill Benson: Thank you.

>> Julius Menn: But the country changed a lot.

>> Bill Benson: All right. A question back here, a little farther back I think.

We're not going to forget you, I promise. I promise.

We have a question here. Young man.

>> [Question Inaudible]

>> Bill Benson: Can you say that one more time for me?

>> [Question Inaudible]

>> Bill Benson: Oh, in the Army?

>> [Question Inaudible]

- >> Bill Benson: What was it like for you in the Army? Is that the question? Yeah. What was it like for you to be in the Army? A young man is asking you this question.
- >> Julius Menn: It was a very informal Army. I worked part of the time. I was transferred to the medical corps and I assisted in dermatology, syphilology, and gonorrhea.
- >> Bill Benson: Ok. For sure.
- >> [Question Inaudible]
- >> Bill Benson: When did you learn about the Nazi's systematic murder of more than six million Jews? What was -- what do you remember --
- >> Julius Menn: Well, we learned about it during the war in Palestine, in the early '40s.
- >> Bill Benson: Do you know how many family members you lost during the Holocaust?
- >> Julius Menn: There were six million people lost. When I lecture in Massachusetts, I tell the kids usually high school, I said just imagine you get up in the morning and all the people in Massachusetts are dead. Because that's about six million in Massachusetts and six million. Yeah. But also there were many gypsies, Poles, and transgender people who were killed.
- >> Bill Benson: I think we have time for a couple more questions. There's one back here in the back. Two back there. Ok.
- >> [Question Inaudible]
- >> Bill Benson: Great question. There's a lot of 14 and 15-year-olds in this audience. There's a lot of 14 and 15-year-olds in this audience. What message would you like those youngsters to take back with them?
- >> Julius Menn: Well, first of all, you shouldn't forget that there was a Holocaust and Holocaust is also today in Darfur, must remember, Rwanda, Kenya, Somalia. Holocaust is a tilt in the human system. If you think about it, the Germans were the most educated people in Europe and yet they were able to do this doctor carry out this awful thing. They declared that some people are below people. They are worse than domestic animals.
- >> Bill Benson: Thank you, Julius.
- There was one other one.
- >> [Question Inaudible]
- >> Bill Benson: Have you visited any concentration camps? In fact, you were just telling me about one that you were at.
- >> Julius Menn: Yeah, I visited the one where the inmates rebelled. 300 were able to escape to the forest but they were betrayed by the native people so only 30 or so survived. And I met this woman, very elegant woman, older woman, at the Holocaust museum and she said, "I stabbed a Nazi to death." Because she was in that camp. And that's what she did.
- >> Bill Benson: I have one more question for you, Julius, before we end. When we finish, you're going to sign copies of your book, your memoir.
- >> Julius Menn: I want to say something.
- >> Bill Benson: Yes. I wanted to ask you what it meant for you to write your memoir. And secondly, it covers your first 21 years. Why did you stop at age 21?
- >> Julius Menn: I lost two children about 40 years ago. I didn't want to write about it.
- >> Bill Benson: What has it meant to you to have written the memoir?
- >> Julius Menn: Well, I'm glad I did. Because for grandchildren it's very important. They should know something about their grandfather.

And also, I want to say about the Holocaust, you should never forget. I think the fact that you are here should help not to forget, not to forget because the people who lived through it, like myself, are very old and there are very few left.

>> Bill Benson: Thank you, Julius.

I'd like to thank all of you for being with us today.

>> [Applause]

>> Julius Menn: Thank you. Thank you.

I'm not Nixon but -- that's what Nixon did. I'm doing this because I'm so glad.

>> Bill Benson: We're going to get Julius up the stairs because he's going to sign copies of his memoir. That's another chance for you to say hi to him and meet him.

Let's get you upstairs.