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UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM
***FIRST PERSON* SERIES**
Speaker: FRITZ GLUCKSTEIN

REMOTE CART

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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. This is our 15th year of the *First Person* program. Our *First Person* today is Dr. Fritz Gluckstein whom we shall meet shortly.

This 2014 season of *First Person* has been made possible by the generosity of the Louis Franklin Smith Foundation with additional funding from the Helena Rubinstein Foundation. We are grateful for their sponsorship.

First Person is a twice weekly 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 volunteers here at this museum. We have had programs on Wednesdays and Thursdays since March. Today's program concludes *First Person* for 2014.

Information about our 2015 program will be available from the Museum's website at www.ushmm.org. Anyone interested in staying in touch with the Museum and its programs can complete the Stay Connected card you'll find in your program or you can talk with one of the museum representatives at the back of the theater when we conclude today's program. In doing so, in completing the Stay Connected card, you will receive an electronic copy of Fritz Gluckstein's biography so that you can remember and share his testimony after you leave here today.

Fritz will share with us his *First Person* account of his experience as a Holocaust survivor for about 45 minutes. If time allows, we will have an opportunity for you to ask Fritz a few questions at the end of our program. The life stories of Holocaust survivors transcend the

decades. What you are about to hear from Fritz is one individual's account of a 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 photograph was taken of Fritz in 1932. He was the son of a Jewish judge and Christian mother, Georg and Hedwig Gluckstein. We see them at the beach.

These contemporary photographs show places where Fritz lived, attended school, and played. As a child, Fritz enjoyed family activities, friends, and school gatherings. Here we have Fritz circled in the middle.

After the Nazis came to power, Fritz' 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. The Nuremberg Law based Jewishness on genealogy and religious practice. This is the star that Fritz, as a geltungsjude, was required to wear.

Throughout these difficult times Elfriede Dressler, Fritz's aunt, provided the Glucksteins with much needed extra food as 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 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.

Today Fritz lives in the Washington, D.C. area with his wife. 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 animals to humans, like Mad Cow disease and, of course, in today's contemporary news we think of things like Ebola.

Fritz is a self-described opera buff and football fan. He told me he likes to watch football on TV while listening to the opera. He volunteers each week for the Museum translating letters and other documents written in German, including handwritten 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; one is 16 years old and the other 13. 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,” available in the museum's bookstore. Fritz donates all profits to this museum.

With that I'd like to ask you to join me in welcoming our *First Person,* Dr. Fritz Gluckstein.

[Applause]

Fritz, thank you so much for joining us today and for your willingness to be our *First Person*. We have just an hour to spend with you and you have an awful lot to share with us. I'll get us started right away.

You were just a young boy when Hitler came to power in Germany. Before we turn to the actual war years, let’s start with you telling us about your family and yourself in those early

years, what it was like living under Nazi power as the power before the war. And as part of that, tell us the meaning of geltungsjude and what that meant to you and your family.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Let me start explaining geltungsjude. Geltungsjudes are children of intermarriages who were raised Jewish. They were subject to all rules and regulations, had to wear the star, but at large were not deported. Geltungsjudes who had lived in Berlin were less likely to be deported than Jews who lived somewhere else in the country. The farther you got away from Berlin, the seat of power, the more you were subject to the local Kommandant. Children of intermarriages that were not raised Jewish were not subject to all the regulations, just a few, and did not have to wear the star.

>> Bill Benson: Tell us about your father.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: My father was a judge; decorated veteran, Iron Cross. He was quite patriotic, always the flags on High Holiday. He even taught me how to salute the flag.

Growing up, I went to the zoo, enjoyed the animals. Take trips. My mother was Lutheran but we celebrated the Christian holidays. And I had the best of two worlds: Passover and Easter and Hanukkah and Christmas.

>> Bill Benson: Your father, as you said, he was a veteran of the First World War.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: He served in the German Army.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Correct.

>> Bill Benson: You said he was awarded the Iron Cross for bravery.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes. Actually, in 1936, the government established an honor for frontline

soldiers. And my father received the cross and certificate stating that he received the declaration in the name of the Fuhrer. He lost his job in 1933. They gave the decoration.

>> Bill Benson: So they throw him out of his job as a judge but give him a decoration for his First World War service.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: In 1933 he lost his job. They told him: Don't leave the building by the front door. There's a double expression, Nazis. Father said, “I came in by the front door and I'll go out by the front door.”

>> Bill Benson: And he did.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: And he did.

>> Bill Benson: And he did.

You told me that the first anti-Semitism that you experienced was associated with the 1936 Olympics. Will you tell us about those Olympics?

>> Fritz Gluckstein: About this time you saw already signs, suburbs, with the sign “Jews are not welcome here” or "Enter at your own risk." And even restaurants “Jews are not allowed.” In 1936, the Olympic Games, all signs disappeared. The moment they were over, the signs appeared again.

>> Bill Benson: Fritz, on a lighter note, you're a boy. You told me about mischief that you got into during the Olympics with the tourists. You would point out things -- if you don't mind sharing this.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: A friend of mine. Ahh, look over here. There is the war ministry. And the poor people were confused.

>> Bill Benson: You were having your fun with the tourists.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Had fun with the tourists. Boys.

>> Bill Benson: At that time, Fritz, was your father and your family -- did they make any efforts to try to leave Germany during that time?

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes. We all did. But, actually, at the beginning people thought, well, that can't happen. Many people thought we lived here for many years, it might pass but then of course realized it wouldn't; particularly after the Pogrom, Kristallnacht.

The United States, first there was a quota. You had to wait until your quota came up. It took some time. And then, of course, you had to get an affidavit. That means somebody had to sponsor you. Then you had to pay for the passage.

We had affidavit, the quota, but it was too late. We couldn't get passage. People couldn't get out.

>> Bill Benson: I'm going to move your microphone up just a hair if that's ok with you. Ok. Thank you.

You mentioned Kristallnacht. You were just 11 on that night, November 9 through 10, 1938, what we call Kristallnacht or the Night of Broken Glass.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Correct.

>> Bill Benson: Tell us about that and what it meant to you and your family.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: I still remember going to school. Saw broken window. One window could have happen, then two and three windows. I realized something was going on. We saw smoke in the synagogues.

How did we know what they used to break? About two months previously, the store owner had to have his name in white letters. All they had to do, here, here, here, and break them.

I remember at that time, arrested, sent to the concentration camp. My father was fortunate. It didn't happen to him but it happened to many of my teachers in high school. I remember we had a little note saying due to special circumstances, report card will be late this time.

>> Bill Benson: Due to special circumstances, your report cards would be late.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Due to special circumstances, the report card would be late.

>> Bill Benson: Did you realize that what you saw on that night, the Night of Broken Glass, was not just happening in Berlin but it was happening all over Germany?

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes. We found out. Actually, it was much wore away from Berlin. Berlin is actually -- friends phoned us. “How are you doing?” Well, they broke windows. They broke in. They demolished the apartments. It was much worse away from Berlin.

>> Bill Benson: Fritz, you told me that the start of the war itself, when Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, that once that happened, events and circumstances changed in a really big way.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: Tell us what changed.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Actually, the night before that, Jews had to take the middle name Israel or Sarah. My name was Fritz Israel Gluckstein. We got a special identification card which we

had to present every time at the government office. I am a Jew. Show it. And each signature was Fritz Israel Gluckstein. Jewish identification had number and this is so-and-so. Food rationing, of course. Jews did not get food rations, no special allotment. No white bread, no meat. And, of course, we were only permitted to shop between 4:00 and 5:00 in the afternoon. My mother couldn't shop at other times. A decent storekeeper, “Let me have your family's Ration cards,” filled the order.

Of course, we had to hand over furs, radios, jewelry, and instruments. We were not permitted to have haircuts. You can't imagine.

>> Bill Benson: Among the many things you were no longer allowed to have, that included pets.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Pets, actually, yes. We had to give away -- the deportation started. Of course people at that time had to give their pets. Later on the restriction to have pets came later.

Actually, what happened, every night a new restriction. It was just harassment. You almost waited: What was the next law? And, of course, deportation had started.

>> Bill Benson: When did you have to start wearing yellow stars?

>> Fritz Gluckstein: About the time 1941, the yellow star. Had to be worn right here. Actually the population behaved very well. I remember happening to me walking on the street and someone just walked ahead of me and then a can of soup or milk or something. Occasionally there was a nasty policeman. See the star improperly fastened. So help you if he were behind you with a pencil.

>> Bill Benson: It had to be on so tight he could not put his pencil behind it.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Stars we had to wear. And we had to hand over ration cards for the star.

>> Bill Benson: You had to buy it.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Ration cards with the star.

>> Bill Benson: I'm going to come back to the fact that you couldn't have dogs because you had a dog.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: In many ways it's ironic that you went on to become a veterinarian or a degree in veterinary medicine. You had a specially trained dog.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes. Friends were deported. We took the dog. Yes. It was trained to walk in a special way. When the dog came, his neck. From the Nazi. He didn't take it. Then for the Jew. Then he took it.

[Laughter]

>> Bill Benson: With your father having lost his job and the ability to go out and shop for Jews between 4:00 and 5:00, although your mother could go out, how did you manage to make ends meet? I think you had to change residences at some point.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Had to change to a smaller apartment. Money was tight. My father worked unpaid, social service agency, Jewish welfare agency. If it had not been the war, it would have been much worse because of a small pension. My aunt really helped us. She bought everything from shoes to everywhere from birthday parties.

At that time also my mother's relatives stood with us. But the colleagues -- I still

remember my father's colleagues. Oh, we are so sorry; we have to break up contact with you. My aunt helped a lot.

>> Bill Benson: You were able to stay in school until June of 1942 when the schools closed. Before we turn to that period, you referred -- in fact, you write in your book so eloquently about your teachers as everyday heroes. Can you say something about that?

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes. Actually, at that time, in school, the deportation already had started. Came in the morning. One was your neighbor. The teachers, they came to school every day in very difficult times to teach us. They did their very best. They helped me for a while with the uncertainties. They gave me a foundation on which I could build going back to school. When I was their student, it didn't occur to me that the teachers were facing actually deportation; that their efforts to live up to their profession. But I realized that they were under great depth.

>> Bill Benson: And you really do pay tribute to them so eloquently.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: They came facing deportation but they still came and taught us. Actually, the school was an oasis. Once the school door closed, we were students. At the end it was 35 and only seven survived. There were four Catholics including me and two. One went in hiding. One came back from the concentration camp.

>> Bill Benson: And among the teachers virtually all --

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Most teachers all perished.

>> Bill Benson: All perished.

When you received your final report card in June 1942, that was, indeed, your final

report card.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes, it was. 1942. The reason why it was because of the dissolution of the Jewish school system; the reason this was in '42.

>> Bill Benson: That was the end of your education.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: The end of my education.

>> Bill Benson: And right after that you were forced to have to go to work.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Actually, I worked for a short time at the cemetery. It was kind of for the local Jewish welfare agency. But then, of course, deportation. Sometimes while in school we took time out to help people carry the luggage to the deportation points. Actually the beginning of the deportation. People received the notice you were deported such and such day. You have to give a list of your belongings. A certain day somebody came, sealed the apartment. They had to go to the nearest collection point.

>> Bill Benson: In fact, you had a very frightening experience when your mother tried to help --

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: Tell us that.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: My mother helped friends to the collection point. The Gestapo: What are you doing? You're helping Jews. I bet you have a Jewish family. You have to report tomorrow downtown at so-and-so at the central collection point.

Well, the next day my father and I reported. It was a former foreman. We were put in a room with six men. The Kommandant was a notorious Vienna Gestapo captain known for his brutality. We were forbidden. Nobody is going to lie down during the day. We did it

anyhow. But we were never caught. And why not? The building guarded by regular police. They came around whenever the Kommandant, "Get up, get up; he's coming." Remarkable. Had they been caught, they would have been sent to the eastern front.

After a week or so somebody came and said had to report in 10 minutes for interrogation. My father and other gentlemen prepared me. Don't be a hero. Don't show signs of hostility or contempt. Answer questions firmly but do not volunteer anything.

When I got there, sitting behind his desk five, 10, SS in the proceedings. Threatened to cut me. Your mother is Jewish. I said my mother is Aryan. Well, they asked me some questions: What are you doing with the shop? I tell you something, you come over here, got a decent Jews for job. Out.

Out I went. To my surprise I found my father. And he stepped outside. I remember it. In 1943, my 16th birthday. But actually it was the first time I had a run-in. I was working at the company that made instruments. I don't know what they were, probably for the Air Force. In the morning, the guard sitting there with the stuff. Suddenly the door opens. SS comes in. "Take your coat. Outside." Ok. Waited. And then came the officers. Tell the driver to get the truck here.

I remember this moment because to call the driver he used a very pretentious term, power driver. The truck came. We had to go on the truck back to the SS. We were driven downtown. We wound up in what was a kind of dance hall, entertainment center. Tables and chairs were pushed aside. We were lying in the middle. I don't know for how long. It was actually something.

Saturdays was half a day work. The workers -- they were sitting at home. You can't imagine they wondered what happened to their children. We were there for hours. And after that, my friend and I were interviewed by some men acted quite nice. "Get out of here. We don't want Jews in here again."

Well, we are lucky. We stepped out. And by doing so, we broke the law because of the curfew, 8:00. We shouldn't have been outside after 8:00. This was a law. It was not written down. People went to the police and said I have to have permission to visit my father in the hospital. A special pass. Didn't know what I was talking about. I went home. My mother just was away visiting her aunt. Said it would be nice if you would come home. My father was picked up elsewhere and sent to another collection point.

Well, end of the month, ration cards had to be picked up. Usually my mother did it but I had to do it. We went to the ration card office. There was a moving truck there. They drove us to another collection point. It was the synagogue where I had been bar mitzvahed.

>> Bill Benson: Your synagogue was now a collection point?

>> Fritz Gluckstein: It was years before where my bar mitzvah had been confirmed. There we stayed for half a day. And then another van -- another open truck. We were sent to another collection point. It was Rosenstrasse. It was an administration building of the Jewish congregation. There they put us in a room with 10, 50 men. Just enough room to lie down. And there we spent our time speculating what would happen to us and lining up to use the facilities.

Of course the building wasn't made up for an influx of people. I guess food, I don't

remember when, 4:00, got breakfast, turnips. After days I was told I was being released. To my surprise, I found my father. I didn't even know he was there. Thought he was elsewhere. We were released together. The secretaries from the Jewish agency had a slip. We were to present it to Sergeant Schneider, the Kommandant of that facility. So my father -- said we had ruined the lives of many people. “Well,” said my father, “I don't know.” And we stepped out.

Then what we didn't know, while we were inside there was a demonstration. Several hundred stood outside, demonstrated. You fight the police. You fight the Gestapo. And from the diary of rebels, propaganda, in the diary he says, well, let’s not do anything now. We can do later much better. Particularly in 1943, right after the Battle of Stalingrad.

>> Bill Benson: Just so our audience knows a bit more about that. At Rosenstrasse you said that was the only -- the non-Jewish wives staged the only public demonstration during the entire --

>> Fritz Gluckstein: The only challenge of authority, only time.

>> Bill Benson: And there's been a movie made about that. Right?

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes. They came right back.

>> Bill Benson: Rosenstrasse.

During this time -- you were telling us about of course Berlin was being bombed regularly and lots of rubble. You were forced on a whole variety of work details that you had to do during that time.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: Was your father doing the same?

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes. We were assigned work details; actually the beginning not the same, different details. One of the details was quite interesting. We called it a game. Scientists, businessmen, course of human nature. With three other classmates and the other workers were afraid we would forget everything we had learned. They started to test us. Now, remember one case I had to remove debris with a wheel barrel. While the wheel barrel was filled I was given questions, geography, whatever, which I had to answer when I came back.

>> Bill Benson: You were given the question. You dumped the wheel barrel rubble, and you had to have your answer when you came back.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: When I came back, I had to give the answer. I still remember one question. When you come back, give the names of the Great Lakes of the United States.

[Laughter]

Of course, you all knew.

And, of course, taught us something else. They taught us to explain the vulgar language that was bandied around because the other workers with the truck. It was very helpful. Because later when I came to the states, I walked in a refrigerator company and said -- [Speaking a language other than English]. And a nice fellow taught me words hoping I would use it. It didn't work. Because one of those words of Anglo-Saxon origin is very similar in German.

>> Bill Benson: These work details, of course, they were incredibly hard work, taking down damaged buildings and all of that. At one point you were forced -- as part of this, you were forced to do something that was referred to as a catastrophic mission.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: That was right. We were out --

>> Bill Benson: Of your own homes.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: At that time we were in a Jewish hospital. Had to go to work every morning. Suddenly, “Up, up.” The Gestapo. You could tell the guys the way they looked. In the van. All right, in the van. Half an hour. Where we were, the headquarter of Eichmann. Eichmann's headquarters had taken a hit. Eichmann was the driving force behind the deportation.

I remember we left the van. A young SS officer pointed at me. “I want him. He looks big. I like a big guy.” I was very lucky that I was assigned to him. Always behaved properly. Never an antagonistic remark or slur. I don't know how he got into the SS. He didn't belong there. All the others I see, some of the other officers -- a captain lived in the building. He was barely civil but didn't live up to the reputation of one of the nastiest officer, Eichmann's deputy, roaming around with a dog cursing at us; was standing on the balcony and gave directions.

Suddenly, "Eichmann is coming." Of course, we all know who Eichmann was. And I wondered how he would look. I didn't know what to expect. Came. Ordinary. Nobody would ever have noticed him in a crowd. Came up, stood right next to me, gave some instructions and left.

At one time we had to remove debris from the front of the building. There were two guards to watch us. One guard, a nasty guy, always cursing us and harassing us. The other guard looked at us, never said a word. And whenever we took a break, he found something on the other side. It was obvious. Made a point of not harassing us. Why? How did he get into

the SS? It was amazing even there two people, one hard and this ordinary soldier. Amazing.

>> Bill Benson: Fritz, of course, as you described to me as the war ground on, coming to a close Berlin was bombed repeatedly, food was scarce, conditions got more and more difficult. Under those circumstances at that point how did your family stay intact and do basics like eat and stay warm?

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Well, some of us worked on the house. We took window frames, occasionally a beam, saw a beam in half. Nobody caught us. It would have been harsh. And, food, well, find some bread. We had bread. The moist got into it. What did we do? We cut off the ends to eat the bread. We knew someone in the country who could get some potatoes. And my father knew a baker that helped, too.

And, of course, the stories helped, helped us. Let me tell you a couple of those. You might like them. A Minister of Propaganda fell into a river, a river that goes through Berlin. A young guy pulls him out. He says: Oh, my good friend, you saved me. What can I do for you? Well, the gentleman said, I'd like a state funeral. Why a state funeral? Well, when my father finds out, he's going to kill me.

>> Bill Benson: So very, very much dark humor here.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Well, SS, a Jew, I'm going to shoot you, kill you. But if you can tell me which one of my eyes is a glass eye, I let you go. Oh, very simple. It's your right eye. How did you know? Well, it looks human.

>> Bill Benson: So these were the jokes you would share with each other.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Something to start us. But they really helped.

>> Bill Benson: One of your jokes that I definitely want you to share, this came -- at some point the Russians are right on the outskirts of Berlin. They're on the way. Now you're forced to build defensive works against tanks. Tell us about this.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: We were dispatched to a location where we have to build foundations for a new Berlin after the war. This was in 1944. Well, actually, for once we built something and didn't break anything.

>> Bill Benson: Before you finish. There they are in essentially what's becoming the rubble of Berlin, building the new Berlin.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: The Russians are close. We're building a new one.

>> Bill Benson: A new Berlin.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: I was building foundations for a new Berlin after the war. Then we were sent to the southern part of Berlin to build tank barriers. We worked with beams into the ground at a 35-degree angle and dug ditches.

>> Bill Benson: To stop tanks.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: To stop the tanks. Well, after hours we can go. Well, we looked at our handy work and wondered: How long will it take the Russians to get through? One said: It will take 31 minutes. The tanks, the Russians come, stop, the crew will laugh for 30 minutes and will take one minute to get through.

Actually, that happened. Two armies attacked Berlin, east and the southern part. The southern part got in so fast into Berlin. They couldn't get to the Jews. Thought it was a little bit liberation of Berlin. We didn't do a very good job because of obstacles.

>> Bill Benson: As you said in the past, you survived because of your mother, luck, and Martial Cognac for getting in so quickly.

I read, and other people have read, accounts on the Russian assault on Berlin and what life was like as they came into Berlin and what life was like in that devastated city in the months after the war. Tell us, if you can, what it was like for your own liberation, when you knew that the war was over for you.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Actually, when did we know the war was over? One day, close to SS barracks, what did we see? There was a line of trucks pushed by SS men. Well, what a sight. I was delighted to see that. Really, the pleasure of somebody else's discomfort. We knew if the SS didn't have gasoline, then the demise of the Third Reich can't be far off. We knew it was over.

Well, I actually remember the Russians came in. At that time I actually was away trying to get some bread. At that time nobody had their ration cards anymore. When I came back, the Russians had arrived. Of course, didn't believe that I wasn't a deserter or a SS man. A Jew? No. All Jews. Well, I showed them my card, my star, and other documents. These together and one of the men who knew Russian, we explained.

When the war was over, we survived. We had the passes, of course. The devastation on the street, houses flattened at times, no water or electricity. But after a while -- we were fortunate. They sent us to the suburbs, to a house. This was particularly fortunate because we could plant beans in front, tomatoes and potatoes in the back. Food was quite scarce.

Actually, Berlin, of course, was occupied by the Russians, the French, the British, and the Americans. We were lucky to be in the American sector. You could tell each one's occupying power, who was responsible for the feeding. If it was dark bread, it was Russians. If it was white bread, the Western powers.

Of course, after a while we got care packages. It was quite something. At that time each package had everything from napkins to toilet paper. And most important were the cigarettes. Cigarettes, if you had cigarettes, you had it made. And, of course, what brand was important, too. They were all welcome, but Camel, Lucky Strike, and so on. But even gold would not count. Couldn't do anything, black market. I still remember just before I got on the boat to leave we were told: Ladies and gentlemen, remember, the moment you set foot on the boat, a cigarette is just a cigarette.

>> Bill Benson: No longer currency.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Absolutely. I used it, later on actually. I wanted opera tickets. I have some cigarettes. You've got them. But, of course, toughest ‘45, ‘46, a very difficult winter. But you lived outside, as I mentioned, at the house in the suburbs. We went into the woods, cut our own wood. But, of course, no electricity, and, of course, no water. The sewers didn't work. You could bury the waste in the ground. But what about in the city? What did you do? Well, not very delicate, but you could see people posting little packages in front yards and at the parks. As long as it was cold, freezing, it was ok. But when it thawed, well, you can imagine what happened.

>> Bill Benson: During that time after liberation and over the next months, at any point did you

or others that you knew, did you consider taking revenge, getting back at any --

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Oh, yes, yes. “Just wait.” “When the time comes, we are going to get you.” We are going to get the people who were watching. We were sitting and watching. At times we covered up our star, camouflage. They came. “Yes. Oh, we're going to get.” We saw those who were harassing us. We are going to get back. No, we didn't. We wouldn't lower ourselves to their level.

>> Bill Benson: And, of course, you then eventually made the decision that would come to the United States but your father didn't. Tell us two things. Tell us why your father and mother didn't move with you and what advice he gave you about your career.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Well, the time came I went back to school. Can you imagine after three years without school? It was quite difficult to go back to school. Some of my former classmates simply couldn't do it, readjust to the schools. But I decided my place was in Germany and I decided to immigrate to the states. We were given affidavit. I tried to go.

My parents, of course, it was quite difficult for them to let me go. But my father said: Look, if we were 10 years younger, I would go with you. But what can I do? I can't practice my profession over there. The law is completely different. Here it is based on old, Latin, Latin law, and over there all English law. I cannot practice my profession. But for you, the future is in America but I hope you will choose a profession that is not limited to one country, like law. And so I did.

>> Bill Benson: And as you mentioned earlier, your 16th birthday you were being interrogated by the notorious bruter of the SS, but your 21st birthday you spent on the ship coming to the

U.S.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: On the ship.

>> Bill Benson: You had decisions to make, all kinds of them, when you came to the United States. One of them was about whether or not to change your name.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Correct.

>> Bill Benson: Tell us a little bit about your name itself and what that means.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Well, knowing the company that sponsored us, provided transportation to cities where the local Jewish organizations volunteered to assist newcomers. I was sent to St. Paul. I had a choice between Detroit and St. Paul. I studied quite a bit of the physical and socioeconomic history of the United States. I chose St. Paul. Minnesota, I knew it would be very cold in Minnesota but I didn't realize that it had only two seasons: July and winter. [Laughter]

But I went to St. Paul. I thought, what shall I do? Change my name, Fritz Gluckstein? Well, Fritz, I looked at the St. Paul phone book. Oh, there are quite a number of Fritz. I keep it. And Gluckstein, Gluckstein actually -- well, Gluckstein means good luck. I always had good luck. I kept it.

>> Bill Benson: You kept it, the good luck name.

I know our time is getting short, but I want to -- you love opera. You watch football and listen to opera. Tell us about listening to your very first opera during that time in Berlin.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Yes. We lived in one room. Of course, Jews were strictly forbidden to have radio, but I had a little, what you call the head phone -- under my bed.

>> Bill Benson: That didn't require electricity.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: It was strictly forbidden but I had it anyway. Every night I listened, mornings. There would be an air raid, the enemy planes. One night there would be an opera broadcast. I had heard pieces of operas. If there is an air raid, I am going to listen for half an hour. Well, I put on ear phones and listened. Listened in German. It was an opera. I could follow quite well. And half an hour, I didn't put it away until Tosca had jumped over the walls. It was first time I actually heard a real opera.

Actually, at the time the Germans were quite advanced. It was all taped. I went out and bought a tape of exactly the same opera I had listened to.

>> Bill Benson: I was -- in your book I was really amazed as you talked about when the allies -- the occupying allies began rebuilding Berlin. One of the things they did encourage was cultural events. So opera became available fairly quickly. There you were trading your cigarettes; so you had gotten your rations for opera tickets.

>> Fritz Gluckstein: At that time the first train downtown to get second balcony tickets. Because I didn't always have enough cigarettes. I am an opera buff. I tell you. You know what my e-mail address is? Opera.buff@verizon.

>> Bill Benson: You're going to be available when we finish for you to sign your book. You just wrote this in the last couple of years. Recently what has this meant to you to finally put down some of what you experienced in a book?

>> Fritz Gluckstein: Actually, I realized how lucky I have been, how fortunate. What happened to all of my relatives and friends, I have been very lucky. It really came to mind.

>> Bill Benson: It's really quite a read. I must say.

We don't have time for questions today. I know that when Fritz is done, he's going to run up there or as quickly as he can to be able to sign copies of his book. That will be an opportunity if you have a burning question to ask him or just to say hi to him. Please do so. I'm going to turn back to Fritz in just a moment, but first I want to thank you for all being with us, for being with us on what happens to be our final *First Person* program of 2014 to remind you that we'll do this again in 2015. If your travels bring you back to Washington, D.C. or if you live locally, we hope you'll come back to *First Person*. The Museum's website will have information about our program in 2015.

It's our tradition here at *First Person* that our *First Person* gets the last word. So before I turn back to Fritz to close the program, I want to remind you again that he will be signing copies of his book afterwards and also that when Fritz is done, I'm going to ask you all to stand and our photographer, Joel, will come up on stage and take a photograph of Fritz with you in the background. It just makes a wonderful picture to memorialize Fritz's presents with us today.

On that note, I'm going to turn back to Fritz to close our program.

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

I'm often asked what I have learned from my experience. And my answer is always the same: Don't do to others what you don't want done to yourself. And then I say: Seize the

day and don't trust the next one. Do it now. Make that visit. Write that letter. Make that call. If you have a dream, go after it now. And if you have two bottles of wine, use the better one first.

[Laughter]

[Applause]

[The presentation ended 12:01 p.m.]