HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

FRED STAMM

Transcript of Audiotaped Translation of Interview

Interviewer: Nora Levin
Date: June, 1980

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FS - Fred Stamm [interviewee]
NL - Nora Levin [interviewer]
Date: June, 1980

Tape one, side one:

NL: ...instructor at Gratz College. I'm speaking today to a survivor from Germany, Mr. Fred Stamm...

NL: Thank you for coming, Fred. I wonder if we could start by my asking you if you would tell me a little about the place where you were born and something about the early years of your childhood experiences.

FS: I was born in a village near the town of Warburg, W-A-R-B-U-R-G in Westphalia. I was born almost immediately after the First World War before my father, Louis Stamm, had returned from the war. My father was drafted into the German army in 1915 and he served on the Russian front first for about a year and a half. And I believe at the end of 1916 he was transferred to the French front.

My father and my mother married in 1915. And like most German soldiers, which, of course, includes Jews, he was a very enthusiastic German. He went into the war to help to win it. It is--I have spoken to many participants--soldier participants—of the First World War. And in our time and day in post-Vietnam America, it is almost inconceivable to grasp the enthusiasm which these German Jews had for their fatherland. And it is borne out by the fact that of any national group in Germany, the Jews made the greatest sacrifice both in participation and injured and with 15,000 young men having died on the battlefield.

My, my mother-- while my father was in the service, my mother lived with her mother in the village of Wrexen, which was in the Duchy of Waldeck. Waldeck is W-A-L-D-E-C-K. Later in this interview I will refer back to this.

As with most young German Jewish families, children came along quickly and in, should we say, a multitude. My sister was born nine or ten months after my parents were married in 1915. My older brother came along in 1917. I was born in 1919, and my little sister in 1921.

NL: When did your father return?

FS: My father returned in 1919 shortly after my birth. At this point, let me just dispose of one problem, what happened to my brothers and sisters. My oldest sister, Ilse, is in America. She survived the war.

NL: World War II?

FS: World War II. She was a kindergarten teacher. She was the only one of us four children with a college degree--by taking a group of German children to England as a guide.

My brother was one of the first men drafted in Philadelphia prior to America's entry into the war. And the last time I saw him was in New York Harbor on December 7, 1941, on Pearl Harbor Day, when he sailed for Iceland to serve with the American...

I served--or to step back, he served two years in Iceland, was then transferred to England for more training, and then to France. After being in France six weeks and three days in combat, he was killed in Lorraine [unclear]. I volunteered for the American army as a so-called enemy alien and entered the army at the end of 1941. And after training in various schools and air bases, I was shipped to India and then on to China, where I spent the war.

My little sister did not have the opportunity to leave Germany. I have extensive letters from her, and it is not clear--it is not very clear in my mind--I have not had the heart of rereading all this mail as yet, but there's a possibility she might have had a chance, but she wrote in one of the letters that she decided to stay with her mother and make no further effort at an exodus.

NL: So she remained with Mother in Germany?

FS: She remained with her mother in Germany. In January, 1942, my father died in our house in Warburg of a heart attack. And in March of the same year, two months later, six weeks later, as a matter of fact, my little sister's name was Edith, my mother and sister were deported to the East and they were deported to the Warsaw Ghetto. I had one letter from them while I was a soldier in America, in which my mother asked to send her food. Unfortunately I've lost this communication. And that's the last I heard from them.

NL: Excuse me. Could we step back a little and deal now with the post-World War I period. You said that Father returned in 1919. Could you tell us a little about your experiences growing up in Warburg?

FS: My father had great difficulties in earning a living. We had an inflation. He was a coal dealer.

NL: A coal dealer? Cattle?

FS: A cattle dealer.

NL: A cattle dealer.

FS: He had--there was an inflation. First my parents bought a house. And, of course, currency became totally worthless. To give you an example, my mother got from her parents a *Midgift* [dowry] of 15,000 Gold Mark to take into her marriage, which is an unimaginable amount of money in America today. When she used this money, and sometime in 1923 she was able to buy herself a brown winter coat. And she related that story to us children many times, tearfully. It just gives you an idea how values simply dissipated in post-World War I, and how the middle class, which included most of the Jews, were affected by this.

In any event, there were four children. Women didn't work in those days. And it wasn't a very easy thing to support that size family under the best of circumstances, especially not under circumstances where very little business was transacted.

NL: Was Warburg an urbanized community or was it...?

FS: It was a town of 7,000 people, but in a way it was urbanized because it was a center of many villages surrounding this town. We had a Jewish congregation of about 50 families. The congregation, as most congregations in Germany, was fragmented into the well-to-do and the have-nots. We did not belong to the well-to-do. We were an honest, upright family with a spotless reputation for all the virtues a middle-class Jewish family should have, except money.

We had a synagogue in the so-called *Altstadt*, the older town, which was a beautiful building. We had a new building in the *Neustadt*, the newer part of town, which was a type of community hall where services took place in the winter because the synagogue could hardly be heated. There was a parochial school where all Jewish children went for four years--the first four years.

NL: This was supported by the Jewish community?

FS: It was tax supported by the Jewish community and the community as a whole, as all schools were.

NL: You got some public money, too?

FS: Public money and Jewish community money. The education we received in the Jewish community school was very poor. Our teacher, who was also an acting rabbi, was interested in politics, as many rabbis in America today, and children were not an important item. And I believe that most of us were educated ourselves in spite of the teacher, not because of the teacher.

NL: Did you have any association with non-Jewish children?

FS: We had an association with a good many non-Jewish children. And I must tell you that antisemitism in Warburg was practically non-existent. And this really is true up until the transition of power to Hitler.

NL: That's very important to note.

FS: There was infinitely less antisemitism than what we experience here in America today, or even what we experienced at the height of [unclear] with the State of Israel in America six, seven, ten years ago.

NL: It's astonishing. How did you relate to the other children, in sports?

FS: In sports and...

NL: Hikes?

FS: Hikes, and visiting each other. We had no Zionist organizations. It was pretty much--the children, we were grouped pretty much--with the *Zentralpartei*. The children organized themselves somewhere in the middle, and it was a pleasant relationship both with Jewish youngsters and with Gentile children.

NL: Now, did you feel the hardship that you described in your parents' situation? Were you aware that they were having a hard time economically?

FS: We were a close-knit family, and there was a special relationship. We respected our father, but as in most German families, a father was someone not so much to

be loved but highly respected, because it was not a buddy-buddy relationship. It was a relationship, tradition-bound, where the father is the master of the family, who sees to it that his children are brought up as obedient, God-fearing children. But a distance remained.

And there was an indescribable love toward our mother, which is, perhaps in America, perhaps you the listeners cannot understand this. It's an indescribable love which will not go away when the child becomes a young man or a young woman. It goes on and on. It lasts into a person's last days.

NL: So father managed to make a living despite the inflation and despite the hardships through the '20s.

FS: He managed to make a living. But one of my mother's unmarried brothers sent us to high school, for which one had to pay in Germany. So we really didn't suffer any hardships per se.

NL: Did you have to go out of town to go to high school, or was the high school in Warburg?

FS: There was a *Gymnasium* in Warburg which had an absolutely excellent reputation and was a boys' school. And boys from all over the provinces came to study at this *Gymnasium*.

NL: Were you able to graduate, Fred?

FS: You enter a *Gymnasium* at the age of ten or ten-and-a-half, and I stayed there three-and-a-half years. Just to give you an idea of the demands on the student in those days: in the second year you take Latin. The first year is pretty much a review, plus new work, of the four years of elementary school. In the third year you begin to study French. And in the fourth year you begin to study Latin. No, excuse me, in the second year Latin, third year French, and fourth year Greek, ancient Greek. So that the theory of giving children too much work, I still believe today that that is a lot of bunk, because I learned very well. I did work very much, but I learned very much.

NL: The demands were great?

FS: The demands were great, but so was the output by the students.

NL: You say you were there...

FS: I was there three-and-a-half years. I must have been thirteen-and-a-half or fourteen.

NL: Which brings us to what year?

FS: It brings us to the later part of 1933, when an edict was issued by the German government that, henceforth, Jewish children who attend high schools should attend Jewish high schools exclusively, should no longer mix with gentile students. Therefore, since there was no Jewish high school anywhere near, since my parents didn't have money to send me to boarding school, that was the end of my formal education. Let me just give you an impression of what it is like to live in a society turned from normalcy into bestiality in a short time.

NL: Excuse me. If I could just backtrack, what were the first indications of this change? You say you were forced to leave the *Gymnasium* toward the end of '33. Were there any signs of a break with the past, in '31, '32, or after January, '33, in the first few months of 1933? Do you remember those periods?

FS: In Warburg, since it was a fairly prosperous town, Hitler did not have a great, following up until he was appointed chancellor, which was on January 30, 1933. I distinctly remember that, I believe, on January 16, 1933--and I believe that was *Shabbes*--we had our last *Bar Mitzvah* in the synagogue. There was hardly any antisemitism. When Hitler took power on January 30, 1933, there was a parade, a night parade, with torches and all these things. And this so lit the enthusiasm of the youth of the town that it seemed as though poison had come overnight.

NL: This came with antisemitism, or was it a call to German greatness?

FS: The call was really mostly always to German greatness. And the call to antisemitism was very subtle in the beginning. It was hidden within--it was a separation of races, extremely well designed.

NL: At first there was this emotional call to the German nation, to the German people, which the youth responded to?

FS: I would say that within three months that there was absolutely no intercourse between German youth and Jewish youth whatever. It had completely ceased. And I don't believe that there was an edict by the Hitler Youth. I believe this was really spontaneity by the youth--by the young people themselves who felt that they had been associated with an inferior race and the time had come to separate themselves.

NL: They must have then come under the influence of the Nazi propaganda?

FS: They must have.

NL: It couldn't have just been completely spontaneous, inasmuch as you had good relations with these youngsters earlier. For instance, there was already the boycott of Jewish businesses, April 1, '33, the Aryan paragraph. So that there were already certain discriminatory actions being set by the government, which had to influence public consciousness, wouldn't you say so?

FS: Absolutely. But there was no animosity of this youth toward Jewry. It was just a total--it was as though we no longer existed. Even so, we met on the street or we looked out of the window and saw the former friend looking out of his window, looking at each other. There was a total disregard of the Jewish youth, period. He simply didn't exist anymore.

NL: In other words, you didn't feel overt hatred or abuse?

FS: That's correct.

NL: But just a silence as a result of physical separation?

FS: Complete disregard of our presence as far as the Gentile youth was concerned.

NL: How did the onset of the Hitler regime in January, '33 affect your parents? Was your father's business affected?

FS: I must relate to you something out of my memory. Four weeks before Hitler took power, which brings us to December, 1932, Hitler was called to--needless to say, I was always very astute at politics and I remember these things very well, Hitler was called to form a government in Germany. But the conditions laid down by Hindenburg were such that Hitler refused to accept it. Consequently, a General Schleicher was called and formed this government.

We as children walked in back of the men, the father and his friends, to the synagogue on a Friday evening. And I overheard a conversation which was as follows: he said that it's inconceivable that a paperhanger and a painter should take over the reins of government of this great German nation. This is how far, how little expectation there was among the adults that Hitler should ever become--four weeks before--that Hitler should ever become the chancellor of Germany.

NL: I think this was probably the perception that many people outside of Germany had, too. It was just inconceivable. So when did Father and other adults, Jewish adults, begin to feel the Nazi presence?

FS: I would say by about April, 1933. There was a boycott of all German business where German businesses--Jewish businesses were marked, where windows were thrown in and Hitler's SS and Brownshirt organization made a general nuisance of themselves.

NL: Did they vandalize Jewish property?

FS: Not at that time.

NL: Not in the early periods?

FS: Not in the early periods.

NL: And I suppose your parents' relations with their non-Jewish neighbors became very strained?

FS: Well, those relations were really cemented better than the relations between youth and youth, so that that didn't break off immediately. They still came at night to visit, or my parents went there and they came to help. And that extended, I suppose, into 1938, at least into 1938. My father was well liked in the community and so was my mother. My mother was a very quiet person. In contrast, I inherited none of that quietness. But, of course, there were so many more years in which they had to form a more lasting relationship.

NL: Was he still able to conduct some of his business with non-Jewish customers?

FS: He was able to conduct his business. He was able to make a living in spite of everything, a living of sorts but, nevertheless, a living.

NL: And all the children remained at home during these early months of '33 and '34?

FS: Yes, my sister was the only one who finished, my older sister, Ilse, was the only one who finished high school. And she went to a high school run by the Catholic Church by Catholic nuns.

NL: In Warburg?

FS: In Warburg? And I always remember my sister telling me that the nuns, before each morning class started, they had to lift their hands to greet the children with "*Heil Hitler*." However, the nuns were always very careful to protect whatever few Jewish children they had, and also make sure that they had been fed breakfast. Surely, they did not show any traces of antisemitism; rather, the contrary.

NL: They were kindly disposed.

FS: Probably in contrast to the general outlook of the Catholic Church as a whole.

NL: She was able then to finish?

FS: To finish. And then she went on.

NL: And what year did she finish?

FS: It must have been 1935.

NL: '35. And what about the other two children? Do you remember what experiences they had?

FS: My little sister was still in grade school.

NL: In the Jewish school?

FS: In the Jewish school when that closed down. And then they were transferred, the little children were transferred to the Catholic school. There was no public school per se. The Catholic school where these children were separated to the last bench or two.

NL: The Jewish children were segregated?

FS: Segregated and totally disregarded as though they simply didn't exist.

NL: And this included your younger brother, too?

FS: No, my older brother. My older brother finished apprenticeship in our town.

NL: As?

FS: He worked as an apprentice in a dry goods store, and he was able to finish that.

NL: Under a Jewish employer?

FS: Under a Jewish employer. I'm not sure of the year he finished, but he did finish.

NL: Did your life change at all after the passage of the Nuremburg laws in September, '35?

FS: I remember the Nuremberg laws especially well because my mother's unmarried brother had a relationship with a Gentile woman, and he was incarcerated consequently. He was very dear to us.

NL: Where did he live?

FS: He lived in the town where I was born, in Wrexen, W-R-E-X-E-N. Please remind me, I'll tell you story about this Duchy of Waldeck. And when he was incarcerated, he was quite a working man, and part of his fortune was taken away from him. This hit my family especially hard again because he had been a constant supporter of tuition for us children, and he probably helped my mother in other ways.

NL: Where was he imprisoned, Fred?

FS: I don't remember where.

NL: And did you hear from him later?

FS: My memory has faded. I don't remember.

NL: Did you have any contact with any national Jewish organization at this time? Did you hear of Rabbi Leo Baeck and the *Reichsvertretung*...

FS: My memories of German rabbis...

NL: Or national leadership figures?

Tape one, side two:

NL: Continuing the interview with Mr. Stamm.

FS: I remember in 1934 in the *C.V.* [*Central-Verein*] *Zeitung*, the publication of the Central Organization for German Jewry, there was an opinion written by a rabbi who said that Jewish children should take up apprenticeships in businesses because the time will come soon when a normal life can be lived in Germany and there...

NL: A normal life will not be able to be?

FS: Where a normal life can be lived in Germany...

NL: Can be.

FS: ...for Jews, and there will be no trained young German Jews to fill these voids. In the meantime, while the rabbis wrote all these beautiful pieces, they themselves took off to America. So when it comes to the German rabbinate, I must say that this...

NL: This statement was from a local rabbi?

FS: No, from a national rabbi.

NL: From a national rabbi.

FS: From a national rabbi.

NL: But it appeared in a local paper?

FS: And my parents read that to me. As a matter of fact, it served as a basis for my parents to arrange an apprenticeship for me in the Ruhr city of Neheim in a men's clothing store, quite a large establishment.

NL: They had some friends or relatives there?

FS: No. I don't know who made these arrangements.

NL: But these apprenticeships were common?

FS: These apprenticeships were common. They lasted for three years.

NL: So did you go, Fred?

FS: I went there and I stayed for two years, and then the business was taken over by Aryan German management, and that was the end of my career as a salesman of men's clothing.

NL: What was your life like for those two years? Did you live with the family?

FS: I lived with a family.

NL: Of the employer?

FS: No, no. I lived with another family. I believe that my uncle, my mother's brother, paid my board. And I rather enjoyed those two years.

NL: What kind of community was it?

FS: It was a...

NL: It was a larger city than Warburg?

FS: It was a large city. And I must confess that I always had, in a way, I always had good sense. In Essen I acquired a gentile girlfriend. I was then old enough to have a girlfriend.

NL: But was that permitted?

FS: It was permitted up until 1935.

NL: And you were there in '34?

FS: It must have been. It must have been in '34.

NL: I see.

FS: But when this edict came out that Jews could not associate with Gentiles, I bade my girlfriend good-bye. It was a very tearful good-bye, but I was determined to remain...

NL: In touch?

FS: To make a clear separation, because I felt then that either I make a clear separation, or I will never be able to leave Germany. I had given up all hope by then that I could ever remain there and live a normal life.

NL: You made this estimate on your own?

FS: On my own.

NL: As early as '34-35?

FS: '35. And...

NL: What other signs did you see that alarmed you, because you were still, what, 16, 17?

FS: I was near the city of Essen. Essen is a big industrial city. And one afternoon Hitler came to Essen and he drove through the town. At that time I could have changed the course of history of the world.

NL: You could have shot him?

FS: I was within twenty feet as he drove by. There was no security whatsoever. I saw the unbelievable enthusiasm of the populace, especially the youth. And all I could say to myself is, "Fritz, what are you doing here? What are you staying for?"

NL: The antisemitism was already intensifying?

FS: I believed that I felt that I ought to search to get out. To the best of our knowledge, we had no relatives in America.

NL: Were you in touch with your family, and were they, too, some of them, thinking about leaving?

FS: Everybody was thinking about leaving. It was a desperate *Drang aus Deutschland*, a push all of Germany. And parents were desperately looking to get their children out.

NL: You felt this all around you?

FS: There was no way you couldn't feel it because wherever you met Jewish youth, there was no other conversation except, "What have you done? What have you tried?"

NL: Were some of them going to Israel, to Palestine?

FS: Many of them.

NL: Many of them.

FS: Many of them were going to Palestine.

NL: Were you considering that?

FS: I tried that. But you mustn't forget that in 1935 already, a paper came out, a white paper came out by Lord--the name escapes me--which, to a great degree, closed the immigration into Palestine.

NL: Yes, restricted it considerably. But you thought of going? I think it might have been Peel. I'm not sure.

FS: Peel, that's right. The Peel Commission, I believe it was.

NL: Were the Jewish agencies helping Jews get out, especially Jewish youths?

FS: Jewish agencies had money, and they could help you if you found a place to go. We had--my mother thought she might have relatives in Kansas City. So she advised me to write to the American consulate in Stuttgart, and that saved my life. I wrote to the consul in Stuttgart and asked him if he could help me to locate these relatives. Needless to say, they had no way or weren't interested in helping any Jews. But in later years this letter helped me. This letter...

NL: Which letter?

FS: This letter to the German consulate, to the American consul in Stuttgart, later on was the key for me to get out of Germany. And I'm going to just go back and tell you why this happened.

In the city of Stuttgart the American consul was a crook and an anti-Semite. If you had enough money, you could leave Germany. If you didn't have enough money, you were confined to remain there forever. He had a tremendous business of which German Jews buying the exit passes--and no matter what kind of passes they had to America, as long as they had enough money, they could get out. Finally, the American consul made a nuisance of himself, or his bosses in the State Department were pressured, and he was called home.

NL: What was his name, do you remember?

FS: I don't remember his name.

NL: I think you remember it, Ilse [Mrs. Stamm]. Yes, Fulks. He was recalled.

FS: He was recalled and another person took over. And he very quickly rectified some of the abuses which had taken place. And every person who had ever inquired with the...

NL: Consulate.

FS: ...with the consulate was given some consideration. In other words, you had to have a waiting number. My waiting number was 22,000 something, and all the members of my family all had very high waiting numbers except my older brother.

NL: He had a more recent one?

FS: Yes.

NL: A lower one?

FS: A much lower waiting number because he had papers to come over. I'll refer to that later. Now this letter was then regarded as a waiting number. And from 22,000, I went down to 593. So I was immediately--I was notified that if I could present papers, that I could leave Germany immediately.

NL: This was '35 or so?

FS: No, this was later. The letter that I wrote in 1935 was registered as having then applied to leave Germany. So from 1938, when I actually applied, I was given a number which was dated '35.

NL: Were you in Essen all of this time?

FS: I was just a visitor in Essen.

NL: But I mean in that little town near Essen.

FS: I was in Neheim.

NL: Yes, Neheim.

FS: I was there for about two years. Then they closed up and I was sent home.

NL: So you received the notice of your name...

FS: No, that was later. Then I became an apprentice. My father decided that, in spite of all the good advice, that the time had come that I should learn a trade. And he had a gentile friend who had a cabinet shop. And he discussed with him to take me on as a cabinet maker apprentice.

NL: Were Jewish children permitted to do that?

FS: Well, we didn't have the official title as an apprentice, but, nevertheless, we were apprentices. And I believe that a Jewish organization paid the master, rather than the master paying the apprentice, as it was the custom.

NL: Was it uncomfortable at all for you in that relationship?

FS: I didn't find--within the confines of the shop, I can say that it was being sheltered from the world. And even the apprentices who served with me treated me respectfully, I can say. But once you went outside the shop environment, it was as though there was no bond.

NL: Quite phenomenal. To me it's fascinating that this non-Jewish man would have accepted you and accommodated himself. Of course, he was being paid, but he was running some risk of being stigmatized, wasn't he, by Nazi elements?

FS: He was stigmatized.

NL: He was stigmatized.

FS: But he apparently didn't care. Perhaps he owed a moral debt to my father, I don't know.

NL: Oh, yes.

FS: But I know they were friends, and it was one of these bonds, friendship bonds, which was probably formed long, long ago and he simply didn't care. And he was especially caring in seeing that I learned, that I did not do the chores which the average

apprentice would do, because he probably felt that I didn't have the time to give, that my time was running out.

NL: Limited.

FS: And he prepared me sufficiently to make a livelihood for the rest of my days.

NL: Indeed. Did he ever comment to you about the nature of the regime?

FS: There were never any personal discussions, but I ascribe that to the fact that the master never lowered himself to discuss personal problems with his apprentices. He was the overlord of the shop and he ran it like a dictator. And this was probably very, very good and it's probably a basis of German prosperity today. There was no...

NL: No socialization?

FS: No socialization, no relationship whatsoever except boss and apprentice.

NL: And this lasted until '37, '38?

FS: It must have lasted until '38, when an edict came out that no Christian employer could employ any more Jews.

NL: In any capacity?

FS: In any capacity. And I then for a short period--this is very hazy in my memory--for a short period I worked somewhere laying railroad ties. I just don't remember where this was.

NL: In a labor unit?

FS: In a Jewish labor unit with a Christian foreman.

NL: I know the German government employed Jews in certain labor units. Of course, they were segregated from non-Jews.

FS: I don't remember...

NL: Did you have to wear an insignia?

FS: No.

NL: Any Jewish insignia of any kind?

FS: None whatsoever. None whatsoever. Now mind you, this was all before *Kristallnacht*.

NL: And so, you stayed on that job for a while. And what were your other members of the family doing, your other brother and sisters at that time?

FS: My younger sister was born in 1921 and was still of school age, and she was home. My brother was an apprentice and he had worked--in the meantime, we had found Dr. Camile Stamm in Philadelphia, who was chief of staff of the Jewish Hospital,[1] a gynecologist who in later years delivered our children. And he had gotten papers to emigrate.

NL: Was your father in touch with him?

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[1]Now Albert Einstein Medical Center, Northern Division.

FS: I don't remember who made the contact. But he did send papers for all four children, but he refused to send papers for the parents because they might be a burden for him and his family.

Let me just interject something here. When I was in America in 1939-1940, no, it must have been 1939, the Cuban, please bring me back to what I was saying before, the Cuban fiasco,[2] the Jewish fiasco came up. And everybody ran for papers to get their parents out of Germany. I went to the Girard Bank--someday I'll have to tell the Girard Bank this story--I went to the Girard Bank on Lehigh Avenue and asked them to lend me, I needed $1,000 to bring my parents to Cuba. And the banker who interviewed me said, "Well, what do you have to show for security?" I said, "I'm a carpenter, I'm young, I'm willing to work, and I'm working, which is more than most carpenters do these days." Mind you, this was 1939. I said, "What more security do you really need?" He said, "Mr. Stamm, it's against my better judgment to lend out the money on those basis but I will do it anyhow. If you can secure a co-signer, we will lend you the money. If you cannot, we will lend you the money anyway." Now I was able to secure a co-signer, but the money I would have gotten either way. However, history books will tell your students about the Cuban fiasco, and nothing ever became of it. I got my money back and I gave it back to Girard Bank. Now let's go back to what I was telling you.

NL: So Dr. Stamm provided for papers for four children.

FS: For four children. My brother--let me just tell you what happened at *Kristallnacht.* We were home...

NL: This was before you got your papers?

FS: No, no. I had papers by then--no. I did not have papers. But my brother had papers, and he had booked passage on a German liner to go to America. One day one of my father's friends came. My father had received injuries in the war.

NL: He was eligible for compensation?

FS: No, he was not eligible, but he was respected and everybody knew that he was an outstanding citizen, and he had partaken in community activities. And so he told my father that he should stay home. He would see to it that nothing would happen. My father was ill by then. He had a heart ailment.

NL: He had had a heart attack?

FS: No, he did not have a heart attack. He had some kind of heart ailment. I don't remember what. He should stay home, and that he should send his sons away. The best thing to do is to give them some money and tell them to ride the railroad wherever they wish to ride, not to stop anywhere, just ride the railroad. He said, "But they must leave immediately." So my father borrowed some money somewhere...

NL: This was November 9.

FS: Yeah. It must have been the 9th or the 8th. And my brother and I started a journey of three days. We rode on the railroad to Frankfurt, Kassel, Paderborn. We rode

[2]A reference to the ship St. Louis, bound for Cuba, which was forced to return to Europe.

anywhere, wherever a train would take us. And after two days we called a gentile neighbor who had a grocery store, whose son was my closest friend, and I asked him what was happening, whether we could come home. He said, "Don't come home yet. But also, I want you to know, don't ever call me again. I will not report you but don't ever you call me again." Some years later I was informed that his son, my closest friend, had bit the dust in Russia. I did not say *Kaddish* for him. He probably got what he deserved.

NL: You don't know under what pressures and fears he lived. What about the little girls, your sisters?

FS: My little sister, the most beloved of my family, stayed with her parents.

NL: During the orgy of destruction?

FS: She stayed there. My older sister was by then a professional, and she lived in the city of Ulm.

NL: She was on her own?

FS: She was on her own. My little sister stayed with her parents and I really don't remember--but I do know that they did not take female children into the concentration camps.

NL: Was your father taken?

FS: He was never taken.

NL: He was not taken, so he stayed, your parents and your sister stayed at home during that terrible time?

FS: I do remember though that we were the only three males in town who were not taken to a concentration camp.

NL: All the others were taken?

FS: Everyone else was taken.

NL: Was the synagogue destroyed?

FS: The synagogue was completely destroyed. The community house was not destroyed because it was occupied by the Brownshirts.

NL: And you came back.

FS: I came back. Let me just go back to an instance which made me aware of the hopelessness of the situation in spite of the contrary advice. In 1933, I don't remember the month, we were with a Jewish organization on a trip to the city of Kassel. While we were there, Hitler--there was a coup in Germany where Hitler claimed that the leaders of his sister organization of the SS, the SA, that the leaders were homosexuals.

NL: Ernst Roehm.

FS: Ernst Roehm, and there were two brothers whose names I've forgotten. And they were then executed. And we had discussions about that, the youth among themselves. And we decided that having never read anything derogatory, just heroism about these people in the paper, that there must be, there must come a total change of policy in Germany. We surmised that. Most of us were no older than 14. And this answers your question--why did I think that there was no hope for Jews in Germany?

NL: You saw in that purge something very ominous?

FS: Yes.

NL: And a change in the direction of policy.

FS: And the change came almost immediately.

NL: And the change came very quickly.

FS: But our discussion was previous to the change.

NL: You were very perceptive, of course, farsighted. What did you find when you came home after the *Kristallnacht*?

FS: I found our house, the doors were destroyed. Some of the windows were destroyed, which I repaired properly. And I found a mood of desperation among the members of my family, because we had a large house and people from the villages who had suffered even more than we had, they had come to us and my parents took them in.

Let me tell you a story on the danger of driving this tape to no end, which just comes to me. They took in a couple who had a little girl. The girl was maybe six or seven years old. When I left Germany, the father said to me--I may become very emotional--the father said to me, "We have a relative in Atlanta. Fritz, do me a favor, try to get papers. If you can't get papers for my wife and I--these were people maybe in their late 30s--get it for our child. But whatever you do, do for us." When I came to America, I wrote to them. I never got an answer.

NL: The letter didn't come back?

FS: The letters never came--there was letters, not letter--the letters never came back.

I was one of the early recruits for the American army, and I was sent to Savannah, Georgia. And these people lived in Augusta, Georgia, which was not very far. The second day of my stay in Savannah, I made it my business to get a day off, go to Augusta. I told my commanding officer that I had a mission of mercy. I must go there. He gave me the farewell. I went to these people on a Sunday morning. I wanted to be sure to see them home. And they lived in what I thought was a palatial estate. Of course, my perception of estates was still Germanized. And I told them of the plight of these three people. I said, "If you can't do for the mother and father, do for the child. It's their only possession. It's all they have." They said, "We have our own worries, and things economically are not so good. I wish, Mr. Stamm, that you would leave now." I said to them, "I wish to remind you that I am no longer Mr. Stamm. I am Private Stamm. You are still a civilian. You could do if you wished." I slammed the door and walked out. That's the last I ever saw of them. That's the last I ever heard of this little family.

NL: They must have perished?

FS: Unquestionably they perished. Now where did we leave off?

NL: So you found a desolate situation at home after *Kristallnacht*.

FS: But also my papers had come.

NL: Your papers had come.

FS: My papers had come, and I didn't waste any time. But I couldn't get a French transit visa.

NL: You needed that in order to...

FS: The only passage I could book was from LaHavre on an American ship.

NL: I see.

FS: And I couldn't get the French transit visa. I don't remember why. So...

NL: The French government would have to give that to you, I presume.

FS: They didn't have to do anything. They were afraid of people getting--see, you had to have your American visa before you could get a French. I didn't have my American visa. I only had my papers. And the papers, the American consul informed me that I could come for a physical examination. And if that is approved, I could leave. Then I could get my French transit visa without any problem.

NL: I see.

FS: So my mother decided that I should go to Stuttgart where the American consul was, and I should not come home. The decision must have been a heart breaker for her. My brother had left. My sister was not home. My father was sick. And she had Edith, my little sister, with no chance, with a waiting number which would have taken her into the late '40s to get out.

NL: But she wanted to save you, of course.

FS: As all German Jewish parents. I'll never forget the day when my--I realized --my mother and my little sister took me to the train. My brother had gone four weeks previous. He was on the way, which was a great relief to my parents.

NL: He was on his way to America?

FS: He was in America.

NL: He was already in America.

FS: He left in November, 1938, probably the 28th or 29th.

NL: And you had heard from him?

FS: We had heard from him by then. I believe we did. When my mother--my father didn't feel good and he couldn't go with me to the train--when my mother and sister took me to the train, as young as I was, I was certain that I would never see them again.

NL: And you went to?

FS: I went to Stuttgart. Now remind me--I just want to make a correction of a previous occurrence.

My brother and I did not leave Warburg on this railroad trip until after *Kristallnacht*. We were home. We were told to go the following day by this person, whoever he was. He was one of my father's friends. And we were all in the house when around 11:00 at night these strangers--they were not people from our town--came in, busted the front doors, busted the furniture, and generally made a nuisance of themselves. We heard them come in. My brother and I were sleeping downstairs, and we ran upstairs. We were all in my mother's and my father's bed when these people came. They did not bother

us physically in any way, shape or form. But it was a very fearful experience to hear all these strangers in the house.

Tape two, side one:

NL: Interview with Mr. Stamm.

FS: I remember in 1935--on *Shabbat* the Jewish children usually went to various little trips, and we went to this volcanic remnant, and we were on top there. I was sitting there and I said to myself, that if I can ever leave this country, as long as I live, I will never, ever return. Now I really didn't keep that promise, because this year we landed in Frankfurt, Germany, and we went home.

NL: But already in '35 you were determined to get out forever.

FS: To get out and stay out forever, that the environment was such that no human being could live there.

NL: Now, to get back to the vandalizing of your home--this took place on the day of *Kristallnacht,* and was it after that that your neighbor advised you to get on the trains?

FS: No, the advice we had gotten before. This was on the night from the 9th to the 10th of November, 1938. And this person had advised our father that after that night we should leave, not before. I don't know why, but these were his instructions, and my father felt that we ought to follow his instructions to the letter.

NL: So you were there, then, during the destruction of the synagogue?

FS: I was in the town. And the next morning, when we left that day, we left the next morning, and that day all the Jewish males, with the exception of my father, were taken away.

NL: Did you have any contact with them? Did your father? They went to Dachau, probably.

FS: I don't remember much.

NL: Did any of them return, as far you know, Fred?

FS: I would say that most of them returned.

NL: Most of them returned.

FS: Most of them returned.

NL: So, you then boarded the train after this terrible separation from mother and sister and you went to where?

FS: I went to Stuttgart.

NL: To Stuttgart.

FS: I realized that since my mother had told me to try not to come back--I realized that I had a very difficult mission because I didn't have a French transit visa. I went to the American consul first.

NL: In Stuttgart.

FS: In Stuttgart. And it was not much more than a formality. I was a young healthy person. Apparently the papers were...

NL: In order?

FS: In order, and my sponsor was, if not wealthy, but well-to-do and physician here in Philadelphia. So I got my American visa early in the afternoon. And then I tried to find the French consul. He was not listed anywhere.

NL: You were all alone?

FS: I was all alone, but I was always endowed with a lot of--a Yankee...

NL: Self-confidence.

FS: Self-confidence. I was determined to find a way. For the rest of my life, I've always called it--I always in every situation have to come up with a pregnant thought. So I decided--I passed one South American consul and I decided to go in there and ask. And I told this man about my plight, and I told him what I needed. He said that I needed a French transit visa. He said, "I'll give you the address. Go there very late tonight and explain your situation to them, that you want to get out of Germany today, tonight. There's nothing to lose. Try!"

NL: This was to a French official?

FS: To the French consul.

NL: But he was not listed in the phone book?

FS: He was not listed in the phone book. No one seemed to know where the man lived.

NL: So if individuals did not indirectly, as you did, find out the location of this man and needed a French transit visa, they would have been...

FS: They simply had to go back to their hometown and then apply by letter.

NL: And lose precious time.

FS: Lose precious time. But I felt that my mother would know why she told me to leave immediately.

NL: Yes. So you found this man.

FS: So I found this man.

NL: Was he in an office?

FS: In a private home in Stuttgart. And I waited there, and a maid came and told me that he was on his way. I waited on his doorstep until 11:00 at night. And he finally showed up. And he asked me to come in, which I did, and I explained the situation. And he said, why didn't I want to go back to my hometown? I told him that I was fearful that they would lift that American visa from me, which, by the way, had been done frequently.

NL: Is that so?

FS: ...from young people. So...

NL: This was done, of course, without giving any reason or justification.

FS: No one had to explain anything. You were a Jew. There was no explanation called for. So he thought for a moment or two and then he took my passport and gave me the stamp. My next stop was the railroad station, where I had 15 minutes to get a train to Strassburg. And a most memorable thing which will never be erased from my memory

happened in the train. In this wagon there was a Polish Jew and I, no one else. And at the border...

NL: This was late at night?

FS: Yes. An SS man came. He seemed very much in despair. He spoke Yiddish, which I didn't understand, and that's why I say a Polish Jew. The SS man came in. He looked at this man's passport. He did not say anything. Then he looked at mine. He looked at my baggage and he told me to go ahead. You must understand that the railroad stops in Kehl, which is a German town, then it goes over the bridge and the next stop, I believe, is Strassburg. And then he went back to this Polish Jew and he proceeded to tell him that he'll never leave Germany alive.

NL: He had papers?

FS: I believe he had papers.

NL: But he was being abused?

FS: Well I--and even today I often wonder what happened to this man, who had come this far within five minutes of freedom. And yet...

NL: You left that car while he was still being abused?

FS: He was forced to leave the car in Kehl, and I went over the bridge. From there I took the train to Paris, where I was leaving in five days from LaHavre. Of course, I had only ten *Marks*, which at that time was four dollars. I went to a Jewish agency in Paris and they helped me with money, which I paid back later on in America.

NL: Were you able to contact your folks at all after that trip?

FS: Not from France, not from France.

NL: So you took a ship to America.

FS: I took a ship to America. I was on that ship during Lincoln's Birthday and Washington's Birthday. And I came to America. I left with ten *Marks* from Germany and I came to America with a pack of cigarettes and less than a dollar.

NL: In New York?

FS: In New York?

NL: Did you have any contacts in New York?

FS: We had relatives in New York. The tape would go too far.

NL: No, let's hear if you have another few minutes.

FS: We have a very unusual family in New York. There were five brothers and three or four sisters and their parents. The first brother left Germany in 1934, and he was able to bring each and every one of his family out of Germany. They were the most brilliant people. By brilliant, I don't mean kind. I mean mentally brilliant. All of these children amounted to--they were able to lift themselves...

NL: These were your cousins?

FS: My mother's oldest sister. And to make it a little...

NL: And you had their address fortunately.

FS: Yes. To make it a little lighthearted, my mother always used to tell me this was the oldest sister and the first one to be engaged. This goes back probably pre-World War I. And my mother was the youngest sister in her family, and they came from this town of Wrexen. The oldest sister was engaged then. And when the oldest sister was a bride, in Germany a bride--you're a bride until you get married. Then you're no longer, you're a wife, in contrast to American modes. So when they went for a walk, my mother-in-law tells me, they hid behind a tree to see what they would be doing, whether they would be kissing each other. My mother was the youngest.

NL: Yes, I'm sure. That's typical. And so you found these relatives in New York and they put you up?

FS: Well, I knew they were there.

NL: They put you up?

FS: No. My brother was at the pier and my brother...

NL: Oh, your brother was at the pier.

FS: My brother was at the pier, and my brother brought me to Philadelphia.

NL: Where was he living at the time?

FS: In Philadelphia.

NL: He had found a place to live and a job?

FS: He lived with Dr. Stamm for a week, and then he had found a boarding house where he moved to, and he worked. He worked in a paper box company.

NL: And what were you able to do?

FS: When I came to my father's cousin's house, Dr. Stamm, he told me that "You're here now. You will be with us for a week." He said, "In this week you will find yourself a job and a boarding house. After a week, you will move out. We will pay board for you whenever necessary from a week to a month, but not longer."

NL: The Jewish social agencies were not helping Jewish refugees from Germany, as far you knew? You didn't want to go through that?

FS: I didn't want to--no one I knew approached the Jewish agencies. It was a matter of helping yourself. And it was not a matter of just helping yourself, and I'm addressing young people, it was a matter of pride, because as long as you could help yourself, you could say to yourself, whatever I accomplish in life, whatever little I accomplish in life, I did it. I didn't have anybody to make my way. I didn't have anybody, and believe me, there were no jobs.

NL: It was a hard time.

FS: In 1939 there were no jobs. I took a job almost immediately. My brother found someone who needed someone to repair furniture. And I got a job. It paid me $7 a week, and I paid $9 board. So it was a losing proposition. My brother gave me the other two dollars. He was by then making a magnificent salary of $12, but he only needed $9.

NL: And what did you do for food?

FS: Well, the $9 included room and board.

NL: Board, yes.

FS: And for transportation, you went somewhere and found yourself a pass on a trolley car, and then you went to your place of work. So if your work started at 7:00 and you had to be there quarter of 7:00, you left the house at quarter after 4:00 to be sure that you either could find a free transfer or you'd buy it off of someone for a penny.

NL: Where did you live after you left Dr. Stamm's?

FS: I lived on Herman Street in Germantown.

NL: Did you live with your brother?

FS: No. I lived with--I lived with my brother with friends.

NL: With friends.

FS: These people were in need of money, in need of boarders.

NL: So that began your struggle here in America?

FS: Well, it wasn't really a struggle because I was in the fortunate position that I had a trade.

NL: You had a trade and you were able to get work.

FS: And I had my brother. And it really wasn't such a struggle.

NL: What about English? Had you taught yourself some English before you came?

FS: Well, here I'm going to address myself to a young listener. The mode in America today of having foreign languages simply didn't exist. It was swim or sink. And the first thing you did was you went to school. You went to night school to learn English. I did not know any English. It didn't take me very long to know the basic necessities. In order to do my job--I worked mostly with German *goyim* [non-Jews]--I didn't need any English at all. And it was an absolute necessity to learn the most necessary words, and the school provided you, then, already free, with a booklet in which were printed various requests of a daily nature. And so you were on your own. I know no one who really didn't make it. I really feel that our immigration from Germany was the most valuable immigration America ever got, not only in young manpower, but also in brains and contributed contributions to the war effort. And today certainly it's not appreciated what the German Jew contributed to America's future, America's well-being.

NL: I think some books have been written, but I think you're right. I think American Jewry is largely unaware of those contributions.

FS: The American people as a whole have no idea. And some of the memories I have from my early stay in Philadelphia are very fearful. I remember, for example, that the House of Representatives in Washington passed an Army service bill by a majority vote of one. I was always politically very astute, and I'm interested, and I'm busy engaged in politics of the Republican Party today. By the majority of one, which would show you that there really wasn't very much anti-German feeling in this country. And it was on the scale, whether it would be a neutral America--it was 50/50. Will it be a neutral America,

or will it be helping England? And I believe that Roosevelt was the instrument in bringing us into the Allied column.

NL: I think that the anti-war feeling was overwhelming in 1939. That's probably what caused this close vote--a fear of being dragged into a European war.

FS: For example, I vividly remember, in the Academy of Music, which has a seating capacity of around 6,000 I believe...

NL: It's three-and-a-half thousand.

FS: Three and a half thousand. They had--Lindbergh spoke as an America First. America First was a political party founded by pro-German elements in the United States, which had a great following, but not just a great rabble following. It had a pronounced political following. And the academy was filled with people, and there were 3,000 people outside at the Bulletin Building, what at the time was right across the street, listening on loudspeakers at what this man had to say when he swore that America would never again be involved a European conflict, especially not to support any English cause.

I also distinctly remember people like Hamilton Fish, Representative Hamilton Fish from New York, who used the platform of the House of Representatives to hold bitter anti-English and even anti-Jewish speeches. There were others. For example, Senator Nye of North Dakota and others whose names escape me. It was--to read the papers in those days, and that we German Jews learned very quickly, was a fearful thing because there was absolutely no certainty that any help would be given to that body of people who were stuck in Europe.

NL: Yes. The anti-war feeling--the pacifist feeling, was very strong. I remember that very keenly because I was a student in college at that time. It needed Pearl Harbor in order to precipitate America's entry. Were there any other impressions that you want to share, Fred, about your life in Germany, or your reflections about Germany Jewry? Grandmother? Mother's mother?

FS: My mother's mother was a true angel. She was adored by the family, all the members of the family. They lived in the town of Wrexen. They had a store there, and they were rather well-to-do people. I don't know whether they were wealthy, but well-to-do. Her husband died very early in their marriage. They had six children, and then he went on a shopping tour in Leipzig and he came back and he died. She was left to raise all these children, my mother being the youngest. And she was pregnant with my mother when her husband passed away. She raised the children and prospered.

NL: She ran the business, too?

FS: Prospered running the business until her sons were old enough to take it over. And this town was located between two--this village was located between two rivers, the Diemel, D-I-E-M-E-L and the Orpe, O-R-P-E. And every so often the rivers decided to take off and engulf the village. And many, many times my grandmother gave the villagers all she had, all she could spare--nightclothes, clothes, bedding, feather bedding,

whatever was needed to keep the people warm after one of these terrible disasters--or lend them things.

She died at the age of 84 in 1934. And I'm sure it was less than a year after Hitler took power. When her casket was carried to the cemetery, it was stoned by village youths. I distinctly remember this.

NL: You were at the funeral?

FS: Yes. This is how fast...

NL: From being a person so respected and loved...

FS: From being so respected and loved to being just a Jew.

NL: Despised.

FS: Perhaps I ought to tell you what it takes to turn a people around. In order to turn a people around, you have to convince them that whatever you do--this was Hitler's way of bringing antisemitism to all of Germany--you have to convince the population that you're dealing either with human beings of less value or human beings which are equal to the least desirable inhabitants of this earth--a rat or a mouse. Hitler set out to do this with the help of a man by the name of Schleicher, who was one of Hitler's leading lights. And he published a newspaper which was oftentimes extremely accurate in quoting the Talmud.

NL: Are you thinking of Streicher?

FS: Streicher[3], not Schleicher. But quoting the Talmud out of context.

NL: Out of context, yes.

FS: And to show that Jews really don't regard Christians as full human beings, and, little by little, convince the German people that you're not dealing with the human race, that you have every right to do to them whatever you wish, because this is a totally undesirable element. It's a foreign element. It's as though something which grows on your back and feet and in your blood. And when the German people were sufficiently convinced that the Jews consisted on this kind of...

NL: Subhuman...

FS: Subhuman element, it was all right to pass all laws, and it was all right even for the most religious to do to the Jew whatever they wanted, because they didn't really do anything against their faith or anything against their beliefs. This was all right to do. You're not dealing with the human race. You're dealing with subhumans, with rats. And they had no qualms because even you yourself, do you have a qualm to kill a rat? No, of course not.

NL: And you think most Germans succumbed to this?

FS: I would think so. The thing which always disturbed me, and even disturbs me today in America, is that the most ardent anti-Semite was not the rabble. It was college professors.

NL: Intellectuals.

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[3]Julius Streicher, editor of the notorious antisemitic paper *Der Sturmer*.

FS: Intellectuals. They must have known that all the Aryan thing about a superior race which really started in Spain in the 13th-14th century--they must have known that this was utter nonsense, that this would lead to the destruction of Germany, as it led to the destruction of Spain.

NL: Well, I don't think we learn those lessons from history, Fred. The situation in Germany, of course, was very different by the 20th century. And there were new forces. Germany, of course, would feel superior to Spain at any point.

Would you like to add any other thoughts?

FS: Every story will have a happy ending...

NL: Well, not this story, not the story of German Jewry or European Jewry.

FS: German Jewry--my personal story had a happy ending.

NL: Yes.

FS: Because I found--now, as for myself, my story has a happy ending. When I came during the war, first of all, I volunteered for the draft. My brother was by then in the Army. I really had no one here. And I went to Harrisburg to tell the draft board that I wanted to join the Army and do my best for this country. Since I was considered a German enemy alien, I was not at all sure of being drafted. A month later I got notice that I could enter the Army and I was told where to go and what to do, which I did, I believe, in '42, end of '41, I believe. And I was inducted into the Air Force, was sent to an Army camp in Pennsylvania, whose name I've forgotten. I was asked to appear on radio and tell my story, which I refused to do, because, I told them, I wasn't joining the Army to be a publicity hound. And I was sent to various technical schools and was trained as an aircraft mechanic. I was then told to report to Atlantic City for European duty, and I told them unless they would give me my citizenship, I refused to go to Europe.

NL: And did they?

FS: And then I was sent to South Carolina, and in short order I was granted citizenship, and I was sent to India and then on to China.

NL: Not to Europe?

FS: I was in China nearly two years--I guess, the entire time--I served in the Air Force for four years, and they were probably the most worriless four years I spent in my...

NL: The most?

FS: Worriless four years.

NL: Worriless.

FS: I spent in my 62 years. I worked with the 60th Fighter Squad and 51st Fighter group of the 14th Air Force. We had fighter planes. I was the crew chief, and it was a group, homogeneous group, could you say, where each man gave one another respect.

NL: Fine *esprit de corps*.

FS: And they were very fine human beings. There were no underhanded deals in promotions. There were no underhanded deals in food consumption

Tape two, side two:

FS: ...fighter squadron, because they were excellently trained pilots and excellently maintained planes where pilots could absolutely depend on the security of their environment in the air. And during other than the rainy seasons, there were almost daily flights over Japanese occupied territories. And through one of my congregants here in Philadelphia, I found out of a fearful mistake which our pilots made one day. They zeroed in on the German refugee camp in Shanghai.

NL: Jews were there.

FS: Jews were there. And Jews were hit conclusively. Their habitat was hit exclusively. I believe there were 60 or 80 dead and a great number injured. And unquestionably--by the date which had been given to me by the former president of [Temple] Tikvah Chodoshah, there was no other unit around which bombed Shanghai. It was my unit which bombed Shanghai. And apparently...

NL: Did you know that German Jews were there, Fred?

FS: No.

NL: You didn't know that?

FS: No. But then I was not a pilot, and I was not privy to much information which pilots got.

NL: You didn't know about the availability of Shanghai when you were still in Germany?

FS: No. It was not available when I was still in Germany.

NL: I think some German Jews went...

FS: Perhaps yes, but I didn't know.

NL: Not in your town, not in your area. Excuse me.

FS: When the war was over, I was given a choice of going on occupation duty in Shanghai or coming home. But then the CO decided, then a War Department script came out which required anyone who lost two or more persons in the family during and because of the war must be shipped home. And my request to move to Shanghai was denied. I came home, and three weeks later, four weeks later, I met my wife. I met my wife, fell in love. I don't know, whatever came first. And we married about five or six months later. And these almost 35 years which we have spent together, they have been what most people dream of, few achieve. We have the kind of marriage where one is not and always have, is not subservient to the other, where we need not agree to please each other, but we can respectfully disagree. We have raised two daughters, and they have given us much joy. We have a grandson. And I must say, materialistically, I have done probably as well as a middle class person should do.

About 11 years ago, my wife encouraged me to take, since I had such a miniscule knowledge of Jewish history and Jewish learning, and all my reading energies, which had always been great, were channeled into American history and Civil War history, my good

wife encouraged me to go into the Jewish aspects of history. And like everything else I do in my life, I overdo everything. I then never again read another book on either Civil War history, of which I have a great knowledge, or American history, but into various phases of Judaism. And along my way I have found some just marvelous teachers whom I will never forget and whom I can never thank enough. Most of all, I think of Dr. Kurland who I admired and who had given me such inspiration to learn. I think of Professor Nora Levin, who not only gave me much food for thought, but who also has the wonderful gift of letting her students disagree with her, and respect her highly. More than that, who has a wonderful gift of learning from her students and doesn't find herself too humble to do this. And you have to be a very great human being to learn from people who know much less than you yourself might think you know.

NL: Thank you very much.

FS: And last but not least, Dr. Passow, with whom I disagree 33 percent of the time, and oftentimes argue with him. Nevertheless, people like that have a way of stimulating your thinking, get you off dead center, not just think about ways of increasing your material worth, because when you reach the ripe old age of 62, which isn't very old nowadays, you realize that you can't live by bread alone. After you have eaten three meals, you find that you have eaten one too many, that you have to have other interests in life.

And especially through these three people and through the inspiration of my wife to seek more education, I have enriched my life. I have seen and spent better years, better thinking hours, and I hope to continue that as long as I can. Thank you very much.

NL: All good wishes to you, Fred and Ilse. And thank you very much for this painful but also enlightening discussion.

FS: You could also call it a *megillah*.