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Understand, Educate and Heal: Renate Frydman, Ph.D., and the Dayton Holocaust Resource Center

Renate Frydman

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Well good afternoon! Thank you for joining us today. I'm Mandy Shannon. I'm the associate university librarian and we are really glad to have the students of the introduction to education class with us today here in the classroom and to those of you who are joining us and watching online via livestream, thank you for joining us. I'd like to give a special thank you in particular to Beth Anderson here at the library, who coordinated this event today and made it possible for all of us to get together in these various forms.

It is truly my pleasure and an honor to introduce our speaker today Dr. Renate Frydman is the founder and director of the Dayton Holocaust Resource Center whose collection is housed in the Charles and Renate Frydman Educational Resource Center here at our Dunbar Library and if you've not yet had a chance to see that space on the second floor I encourage you to stop by this afternoon if you're here in the building or the next time you are in the building.

In addition to the resources available to check out, there's information there about some of the people featured in the Faces of the Holocaust series. This series is a project that Dr. Frydman has been working on for over 30 years, interviewing Holocaust survivors, liberators, and righteous gentiles from here in the Dayton area. Additionally in the DHRC on the second floor, you can see artwork from high school students in the region that was submitted as part of the Max May Memorial Holocaust Art Contest that is sponsored by Dr. Frydman and her family in memory of her grandfather Max May. Also in that area, one of the books you can checkout from the collection is 'Anschel's Story: Determined to Survive', a book authored by Renate Frydman about her late husband's experiences as a teenager in Poland during the Holocaust.

If any of you have been to the museum of the US Air Force here in Dayton, you might have seen the result of some of her work as the curator and docent for the Holocaust exhibit; Prejudice in Memory which is on permeant display at the museum.

Dr. Frydman is the recipient of many awards and honors, including the Dayton Art Institute Pamela P. Hawk Award for Excellence in Education, the Woman of Valor Award from Beth Abraham Sisterhood, the Outstanding Volunteer Angel Award from Wright-Patterson Airforce Base, the Humanitarian Award from the National Conference for Community and Justice, and the Torch of Liberty Award from the Anti-Defamation League. She received an honorary doctorate of humane letters from Wright State University in 2009 and was named by YWCA as a woman of influence this year.

I think by the end of her presentation today, you'll understand why that list is so long. With that, I am happy to welcome Dr. Renate Frydman and turn it over to her, thank you.
Well good afternoon to all of you who are in this room and those of you out there. It gives me great pleasure to be back here at the Wright Dunbar Library because it has become the home for our Dayton Holocaust Resource Center and it's gone a long way from my house, where I started, with reaching out to teachers because in the first years when I went out to speak, and only by invitation, I found that teachers had very little resources to do this work with their students.

Textbooks had maybe a line or two about the Holocaust at the time and so, they wanted to teach the subject. I'm sure they did with some research and you have to know there was no Google. There was none of the things that we have today to help us find things about history or whatever we're looking for. But when that came about, I decided that we needed two things: We need a Holocaust Education Committee which I started in 1980 and the Dayton Holocaust Resource Center and the only place at first, it was began, was at my home.

I had resources, I started to collect video tapes, and had a lot of piles of newspaper articles and other resource material. And we did a newsletter once a year in those years and when those newsletters reached many teachers. They started to want to know more and have speakers and have—I sent out video tapes, I sent out books myself at the beginning until we went to Hello Academy in Dayton which is the Jewish day school, it's moved from where it was then. They put us in the library, in one corner with a desk which I bought at a yard sale, a part of a filing cabinet, a few shelves, and a telephone which we put in. Not a cell phone because there were no cell phones yet at that point so that became a little more influential because now we had a real place more or less and we got more and more teachers involved. But I'm not here to tell you that long story. What I'm going to try to do is weave it in to my own story

Which is—it's different. It's different then---

Every survivor that is considered a survivor from the Holocaust has a little bit story and some of them were a little older and some of them were—very few were younger who survived. I only survived not, thank God, the camps and all the horrible places but survived and this is what the top museums in the world called a survivor. Someone---

In 1933, the Nazi party was voted into power in Germany. Now we got an election, a two year election coming up, and when you're all old enough and maybe some of you already are, you really should vote if you know the people you want to vote for. But as you get older, voting is extremely important and nothing gives me more reason to say that then that the Nazi party was voted in in 1933 in Germany, and shortly there after, Hitler became what they call the "Chancellor".
Actually, the term should have been dictator right from the get go and he already had voiced his very racist, anti-Semitic remarks in a book called "Mein Kampf" which was all in German. I only read a little bit of the translation and that was enough for me. He wrote it when he was in prison and some of the language against various types of people including Jews, was really not very pleasant to put it lightly.

7:53 --- 8:20
So when he became dictator, chancellor, of that country, Germany, he had this terrible feeling about Jews which actually no one can explain it totally. He was a person who hadn't really succeeded at some of the things he wanted to do, he found a group of people that he could target and they were the Jewish people.

8:21 --- 9:58
Now my family on both sides is Jewish and were in Germany since hundreds of years. It's documented. So, they felt pretty comfortable there. Probably the way maybe your families and you feel in this country, I hope. But, both my grandfathers served in the first World War for their country, for Germany. They were decorated, they received the iron cross which is a decoration of valor, and they had sacrificed by being in that war as a soldier. And then when the laws were passed against the Jews, one of the first things was all Jewish people lost their citizenship. They were no longer considered citizens of that country but they went a step further. The veterans of the first World War, which included my two grandfathers, were also not considered citizens of that country anymore, of their country that they had fought for, which you can imagine in today's world, we have a lot of veterans in this country from a number of wars and recently even recent wars and if they had come back here after a time, either their religious, ethnic, or background was considered no longer a citizen, you can imagine how they felt. Well, particularly my grandfather on my mother's side which---

9:59
Do we have a picture? Okay, that will come in a minute.

10:05 --- 10:36
The first thing he was very upset about was of course, losing his citizenship. The second thing he was very upset about was -- I was a baby at the time, I was his only grandchild and someone threw a rock on my baby carriage from our apartment building in Frankfurt where I was born. Although I wasn't hurt, he said to himself I'm told, "It's time for me to leave here and go to America and make a new life for my grandchild."

10:37 --- 11:22
And so a lot of things had to happen before you could leave Germany. People leave their countries now when their afraid and some just leave. There's no paper work, there's no anything, no documentation that they go through and that's not necessarily a good thing but that's how it is. I spoke recently to a young woman whose actually from Vietnam and she had been 11 and put on a boat with her parents, a wooden boat with many other people that was just out into the Pacific, you know, see where you land. There's a lot of stories, you know, that we could talk about within immigration and refugees.
11:23 --- 12:08
But getting back to my story, my grandfather had cousins in New York, he wrote them and asked them. You needed three things to get out of Europe and particularly Nazi Germany. You needed a passport as you would need if you were leaving the United States to visit another country or go to another country. Then you needed--There was a quota system set up by the United States from countries in Europe and I can tell you, and this is documented, that only 10% of those quotas were filled during those years with the war. So, in other words, it wasn't all that easy.

12:09 --- 12:43
And then you needed an American citizen to sign a paper called an affidavit. It said for five years after you got here, they would be responsible for you in case you didn't make a living. Now the fact is that most people that came here from various countries and certainly at that time wanted to work and make a living. And they did. They came here and they went to work. And so there was a risk element by signing papers that said you were responsible for a person for five years. And this was after the Great Depression in the United States which you may have heard or read about.

12:44 --- 13:26
So, my cousins signed the papers for my grandfather. They did not ask if he had a family, and at that point my grandmother, Lydia, was brave enough to let leave. She allowed that. Saying allowed is maybe a harsh word for a couple that were married a long time. But, you know, in many cases no one knew who from their family would leave and who would stay behind and how would that react on the family and many people would not let their wage-earner, the father or husband, to leave and that ended badly for them.

13:27 --- 14:46
So my grandfather came, I think '37, 1937 to the United States. He immediately found a position in New York City. He was an artist and architect and he got a job in a manufacturing company that made articles like metal hampers and pictures and so fourth that were designed and drawn by real artists so he had that job. It wasn't a big paying job but it was a job. And then of course he wanted to bring my grandmother, my parents and me over here, that was the whole purpose and then the cousins went to an office in New York, and this is a strange thing, but every office had its own rules. I mean, in other words, there wasn't a standard that every office had to do such and such. So, if they decided that they didn't want more immigrants or they didn't want more people to come over, all they did was say like to the cousins they said, "You don't earn enough a week to put four more people to sign those papers for four more people!" And so my grandfather spent a year and a half in New York City looking someone to sign the papers to get us over.

14:47 --- 15:13
In the meantime, things were getting worse and worse in Nazi Germany. My father's business was taken away and it came to the point where Jewish doctors and lawyers, uh people- non-Jews, were not allowed to use Jewish doctors or lawyers which they had used maybe for years and years. They were not supposed to have a Jewish friend. That could be punishable by death believe it or not.
So, it just changed the whole situation of their lives. And my father was warned shortly before Kristallnacht, which is coming up the 9th and 10th of November. Kristallnacht is also translated as "the Night of Broken Glass" - I don't know how many of you have heard of it or learned about it. But it was really imminently the beginning of the Holocaust where things were really gonna get worse and worse, and this non-Jewish friend of my father's said, "You better get your family out before you planned because you are on the list to be arrested," That was my father and so that hastened preparations really fast because Kristallnacht came.

16:06 --- 16:49
Jewish store windows were broken, that's where it came; the words Broken Glass, Night of Broken Glass or Kristallnacht, and Jewish men, 30,000, were arrested in their homes or on the streets and taken to Buchenwald, one of the concentration camps. Included in that number was my father's brother, my uncle and then, every single Jewish house of worship, called a synagogue or temple, was either burnt to the ground or completely decimated inside. We have a picture of one such a place at the Air Force Museum before and after the destruction.

16:50 --- 17:20
So, actually our papers weren't---Our ship was not ready to leave England and so we needed to be able to get to England to catch that ship and my mother, who was in her late 20s, had the bravery to go out on the street and go to the British embassy in Frankfurt and beg for the papers to get us to the United States, to get us to England at least first.

17:21 --- 18:18
Now, I will stop here and tell you that my mother lived to almost 108 years of age in Dayton. She lived in her own home and people who knew her knew that nobody ever said no to my mother and so, when she went to the British embassy, and there were Gestapo, German guards, in the British embassy already and she asked for those papers and she got them. It was a little bit of, y'know, difficulty and some of the Germans made some remarks But she just didn't, y'know. That was her purpose was to go there, get those papers, and get back in time for us to get out of there. And so, she did. And that afternoon, I'm told, my father somehow got someone a car to drive us around the city of Frankfurt when all this was going on and they were actually already throwing Jewish books in the streets and burning them.

18:19
And that's another story we'll address if we have time But...

18:25 --- 19:20
To get to the train station, that train station, that very train station that you see in front of you, which was the train station in Frankfurt. And that's my first memory! I don't know if any of you have a first memory that's really vivid. Well I have that memory of me being a very small person in a very large place and with tracks and a train's going to come in and that train is going to take us away from there And my parents being very anxious. Y'know, even a little child of two feels that and I can tell you that for the rest of my life, till now---there's no trains coming to pick people up in Dayton but there were many years ago--- And when I'm very close to a train, I get this funny feeling in the pit of my stomach like I got that day I'm sure.
But we did get on the train and before we even got to the border, a couple of different men dressed like anybody else came to my father and tried to get him to say something bad about Germany or the German government. My father was too smart with that - then to do that - and so we made it out of Germany, out of the country to, uh, first to Holland, where we stayed with relatives for a short time and then to England where we also stayed with my father's cousins in London until our ship was set to leave on the 2nd of December and uh, in Southampton, and the name of the ship was the Washington, which of course I love, I love that name. It was the largest passenger ship-- at that time-- built by America and I wanna tell you, it was not a pleasure trip. Although I don't remember it, I just remember what I was told.

We had to cross the Atlantic, obviously. It was December, the waters were very rough. My father was very seasick, I'm told. I wasn't much seasick, I was told, but even before we got to New York, at night one night, my father said to my mother that the engines had stopped and my mother said, "You must be fantasying." He said, "No, the engines stopped."

What happened was the ocean was so violent that it tossed water on to the ship deck and they were hauling water off the ship deck sort of like, "Well, this ship is gonna sink and we're never make it." But we did. And the ship got to the New York harbor and my grandfather appeared to greet us and we had an apartment to move to.

And I do sort of remember one thing that---This is that apartment house where I told you about in Frankfurt. Before the war when I actually lived there with my parents on the third floor, there was a balcony (picture on left). And this one (picture on right) was taken by a friend of mine in more recent years. It was the only building on that street that had survived the war and hadn't been bombed. The rest of the buildings, we knew that because the other buildings she said were all new looking. And so- but by a few years later when my son went there for business, even that building was gone and it was a new conservatory. So that's all gone. But that's the picture we have of it. And this is my hero, my grandfather, Max, who is the art and essay contest – the art contest is named after him that we've had for 25 years. Right now some of that Holocaust art by students from Dayton is at the Art Institute for 2 months and it's amazing what the kids have done through all those years in art.

And so we got to New York, my father got two jobs. We didn't come wealthy, we just came. And sometimes kids ask me, "Well, what happened to your uncle?" So I'll just tell you what happened to my uncle. He was in Buchenwald which was one of the concentration camps, a large one and when we were going through England and London, somehow my father found out that his brother had been taken to this camp and my father went to the bank in England, in London, with a very prominent person somehow that he got connected with and he took most of the money that he had put in that bank from Germany to ransom his brother out of Buchenwald. Now, at that time, if you had somewhere else to go, because at first the Nazis wanted the Jews out of the country. When that didn't work, that's when they started to set up the death camps and so on.
But when he had- he got that money to ransom his brother out of Buchenwald and it worked. But my uncle didn't know why he was ransomed out. He got his bride to be, they were supposed to be married that week. They went to England and stayed for a year before they got to New York. My uncle never knew that my father had done that. I think my father did not want his brother to feel like he did this, y'know, he didn't---My father didn't want him to feel obligated in that sense.

And so it wasn't until my uncle's 90th birthday when I went to New York to take him out for a day and really entertain him and told him that my father had done that. He was shocked. Had no idea. But there he was. He lived to 95. I mean these are stories, these are the things that make up the survival or not the survival.

Anyway, to go back to us in New York and both my parents working. My mother did what they call "Piece Work" which means that she went to a place on the subway, got some material, made hats, took--y'know she made a group of hats, she would take them back to that place and they would pay her--- what like 6 cents a piece. It's called "Piece Work" and that meant---she said to herself, "I got to work faster because I'm not making enough." Y'know, but she did keep doing it.

When our--they had sent their—you know, everything that they owned, that they wanted to come to the United States before we left, quite some time, it took three months to get things over the ocean. And when those boxes came to our apartment in New York city, and my mother was opening them and I have a very slight memory of it, she started to cry because the valuable things like the good dishes, the silverware, place settings for the family, and so forth, there were only three place settings left and--But I derived something that in my mind that things are not all that important in your lives and my life because you know you can replace things. What you can't replace is your family and your friends. And so, I've kept that very high in my mind throughout my life.

So I got---Well how did we get to Dayton? After a year and a half, my father got work here in his field to come to Dayton and we came here and when I started school, I was a little bit younger than some of the kids. Somehow my mother got me in kindergarten early. I went to public school. I went to a public school in Dayton that had almost a thousand kids K-8, of that there were five Jewish kids in the whole school. And I tell you this because there was some racism and antisemitism, name calling, chasing me home from school and I became one of the fastest runners in the school because I lived at boarder line with the next school district so it was a mile and we went four times a day, that mile back and forth. But you don't know why people target you--especially when you're a little kid. Y'know, I hadn't done anything! Except I am who I am, y'know and I was Jewish and they didn't understand what that meant because they hadn't really been with someone and it wasn't until the 7th and 8th grade that I became friends with one of the non-Jewish girls and she was very popular and pretty soon I was with a group and in 8th grade we went to a different church every week and they came to my synagogue.
That had a big impact on all of us I think because until you learn something about someone else, who they are, what they care about, you know, what your houses of worship mean to you. That's why the Nazis targeted, not just the people, but the houses of worship because those are important things in your life if you so want it, if you believe in something. That—That whole thing was really, very important that we did that.

So, we got to know each other one on one and not with all the stereotypes that you hear and you see. But that experience taught me something; that people's minds can be changed. Believe me if I didn't say to you then in the almost 50 years that I've been invited to classrooms and like you young people and to churches and to everything, anything and everything you can imagine, every group that has asked me to speak to them. If I didn't believe that some minds could be changed, why would I be doing this? I'm a volunteer and I want to do it. But I also believe that sometimes someone can be very racist and prejudice and yet maybe they hear something from someone that makes them think twice about it and that's one of my hopes. That, and that bullying is not very good.

Bullying happens to a lot you too maybe. You know, you don't have to be black or white or Jewish or some other religion to be bullied. You can be too tall or too short or too fat or too thin or wear glasses or a million other things that have caused you at some point to be bullied or abused in some way. Well I have a theory about that because I was and I think when it's over, you have to stop being a victim. I think that, at some point, you have to do something in your life that helps other people in some way and you know, like they say when you're in a kid in a sports field, "Shake it off, get over it." It's not that easy and that doesn't mean forget what happened to you. Never But it means that you have to lift yourself up and you have to say that "I'm the best I can be! I feel I'm the best Jew I can be!" That doesn't mean I'm perfect or that I do everything that is written down that we are to do. But I'm the best I can be and I stand proud at who I am and have always stood proud who I am. So therefore---you know, this is a long road I've traveled and I understand, maybe more than even some survivors, how it feels to be on that other side where you are bullied and I would also say---or have racism thrown at you.

I would also say that the Internet is a wonderful thing and I use it constantly, but sometimes its used to hurt another person. If you --- I don't think any of you - You all look like really nice young people-- But if you or a friend or someone you know is doing that. You see, when I came home from school, I had a safe place. I had good parents and that would kind of dissolve whatever happened during the day. But when you do that, when you shame someone or you hurt them on the internet that keeps going and going and going and that person can't get away from it very easily and it hurts them deeper, a lot deeper then you ever could believe and sometimes it has a bad outcome So it's a good thing to kind let that go and if none of you do it, that's all the better. That's all the better and I'm glad.
Then so, when I was in my teenage years I met the man who’s going to be my husband. Uh--Oh! That should have been earlier. You know I did this PowerPoint with someone at the Air Force Museum. A wonderful man who is head of the education department and we did this sort of in his time when he had time and I brought him things and we threw them in there. This is actually something you will not see very often. This is my immigration card with my picture on it. I was probably 1 1/2 or 2. I love this picture because I was really serious and you know, a serious little child. I probably was a serious little child. It has the Swastika and the eagle which was the symbol of the Nazi government. It has...Then when we got to the apartment, the United States government on the other side signed.

33:15 --- 34:08
And then the next one is my passport. This is a picture--I used to carry these things with me - but here you can see it better than if I just held it up a small thing in my hand. So here is my passport, and you will notice on the left-hand side, on that left side there's a red-letter J. Um, of course you know what that stood for. If you were traveling today, your passport would not have your religion signified on it. And that's a good thing. But it wasn't just that Germany wanted that on a passport, and don't forget--I was one of the lucky ones to have a passport. This was a child's passport, it looked just like the adult's. It was not leather bound.

34:09 --- 34:30
But a million and a half Jewish children were killed during the Holocaust and I definitely would have been one of them. They came for my father right after we left Frankfurt, to our apartments and children of two were not--they were not worth anything so, you know, I would have been one of those children that were killed.

34:31 --- 35:21
So, it also has the swastika and the eagle. I know standing here in front of you that none of you would ever put a swastika anywhere on a book or on a building, but some kids have done that and some even young--people your age have done that and what it is is a sign of pure terror to anyone who went through that time period. So, I would say---In Germany actually, if you had a swastika or show it out in public in anyway, you can be arrested. They don't want that symbol to represent them anymore ever and that's why we have this, you know, show this at this time.

35:22 --- 37:04
So, I met my husband when I was in my teens. He had just come over from being a survivor who lived the entire war in Poland and that's what this book is about and he was only 13 to 17 when he lost his whole family. He lost his home and everything that was dear to him and he was shuffled from one place to another. However, unlike a lot of people that this happened to - and I have to say that he was not in one of the death camps fortunately because I don't think--bare minimum of people ever escaped from those places -but where he was, he was slave labor in various different camps and places where he was forced to work for the Germans, whatever they said to do. And he was very smart and very lucky, I would say. Maybe this helped him maybe it didn't, he didn't look Jewish. You know that stereotype that there all dark hair, brown eyed, and all that. He was blonde, and ruddy faced, and spoke perfect Polish. I'm sure maybe that helped him too But he really used his whits and escaped from various places and I think that in the
story-- maybe those of you who have ever read the book-- he escaped from one place that was really a serious place in Poland.

37:05 --- 37:46
It was called Pionki, this town, and he was one of the young men brought there in the truck from another place which had--he escaped being killed from 400 people lined up and he was only four away from the cut out and these other half were shot; men, women, children on the spot and some of them were his relatives and he just managed not to have that happen and after a time he was on one of those trucks that was taken to the Pionki munitions factory, which was the only munitions factory in Poland and he was put to work.

37:47 --- 37:53
Now they weren't beaten, they had to work a lot of hours, they were fed, but when he got there, he looked around and he said, "It's not going to be so easy to escape from here." There was barbed wire seven times around the camp. It was on the edge of a huge forest in Poland. The forest ran for hundreds of miles, all the way to Russia, I believe, and escaping from there was---I wrote the book, I got the tapes with him when he told his story and I still can't quite envision what that was like because the first group that he planned with some other--six other young men to escape and the last minute, a German called him over to help him bring some food over to some prisoners and those other young men got almost out and were caught and the next morning they were all hung and everyone had to watch that and he still said to himself, "I'm going to escape this place."

38:54 ---39:44
Which was a very wise move because when I was doing this book, Google was my best friend. I was constantly looking for things about Poland and cities and then I looked to the Washington museum for advice on "did anyone else escape from Pionki?" I was curious. They didn't have anyone and they have really big lists of survivors and then even the Israeli museum, Yad Vashem, in Jerusalem, they had no record of anyone escaping. Some people ended up on trucks to go to, sent to Auschwitz. Well, of course some survived and some did not. But a few that survived, so they survived Auschwitz not actually Pionki.

39:45 --- 40:59
So, he did, eventually after, found an older man that he knew from his town and the two of them planned an escape and they had wire cutters--I mean the story of the escape to me is a really monumental thing. They had wire cutters, they cut through the fence, and they were almost out and, of course, they were caught by two German guards and a Ukrainian guard. The older man took him aside and the others took the older man that he was with aside. And... When the older man, who he could smell that the man had a lot of alcohol on his breath and he said, "Do you have any money on you?" Because at that time maybe they had a few dollars, the ones who were working and he went to reach for it and then he just hit the older man and the older man fell flat and he took off. He got through to the last part of the wire and he went into the forest and then he lived in the forest----There's a lot more to that---but he lived in the forest for almost three years.

41:00 --- 41:37
Now I will tell you, those of you who have camped out, this is not like camping out. Only what he had on his back---No food, no supplies, no you know all the things that you can carry with
you on a camping trip. I've never been on one because the 51 and a half years I was married to Anschelor Charlie, as he called himself in this country, we never went camping. After that experience of being in the forest for three years and surviving every day, hiding from the Germans, trying to get food from farmers on the edge of the forest.

41:38 --- 42:55
It was---(referring to the picture) that was me at eight. Forget about that. Smiling! Yeah I was a happy camper! I was in the United States of America. You know, and I'll tell you something for all of you, I assume you're all born here or at least I hope you were all born here. You don't know---He (Charles) said that at the end of the book to some kids when he finally did speak, you don't know how lucky you are. This is still the best country in the world. Look at what's going on with the rest of the world. I mean, you know, for all the good and bad we have today, we're still the best in the world. We are. The problems come and go but eventually they get resolved and they'll be better times again hopefully. And you're in a classroom! Men and women! You can come dressed almost anyway you want. You can learn anything you want practically. That's lucky. That's wonderful. You know and we wish that for the rest of the world but its not happening in many places.

42:56 --- 44:18
So, I tried, as was very common with survivors. My late husband, he died 18 years ago suddenly and I had nine tapes that I had made with him the last 20 years of our marriage. He did not like to talk about it in public, he did not share. He shared some things with our kids, our four kids, but he didn't go in to great details and I asked him one day when we were on a road trip, on a long trip. I had my tape recorder---I worked for the Dayton Daily News for 30 years as a contributing writer and I had my tape recorder with me. And I said, "Tell me more about your experiences!" I knew a lot but I surely didn't know everything. And he did and then I made the nine tapes over 20 years. And when he passed, I thought we would do like a book for our kids together but that wasn't going to happen because he passed away. So, then it came to me having the tapes stored away and after he passed away, for seven years I couldn't listen to them, because I couldn't listen to his voice and finally, after seven years, I said, "I have to get those tapes out and listen to them."

44:19 --- 45:01
And I started to transcribe, hand transcribe all of the, every word that was in those tapes. And then I started to get on the computer, which I use a lot but I'm not very fast. And then my kids started to say, "When are you going to have the book? When is it gonna be done?" And then my youngest daughter, Melinda, said, "Do you want me to help you type and you read to me so it will someday get done?" And I said, "Of course!" You know, and we went at it for about a year and a half whenever we had time we did some of it. And it was hard for her because she heard things on the tapes or on the story that she hadn't heard before.

45:02 --- 46:21
But anyway, finally in the winter of 2017, I was at her house and there was a big snow storm and she said, "Why don't we finish it now?" and we did. In two days. And then I had to get a publisher and all of that. But what worried me about doing the book, was "Is there going to be enough description from him about what happened?" And there was. A lot. A lot. Even to the point where he was like in the forest and he said he felt like he talked to God and God talked to
him. And even though you lose a lot of your religious teachings, he was from a very religious Jewish family. But you know, the years of what he went through which I couldn't even begin to tell you all of it is what really when we were married and when we went together and so forth I got him to come back to a synagogue and he came back to a strong religious feeling. And that doesn't always happen, but it did And we had the four children as I said and the four children grew up.

46:22 --- 47:38
Every one of my kids went to college and graduated and every one of my grandkids went to college and graduated. And when I received a PhD here at Wright State, I said "I've been to every graduation and I attend to be at every graduation of my kids and grandkids." and I was thank goodness. I don't know if I'll live long enough to be at the graduation of 14 going on 15 great grandchildren 'cause the oldest is nine so little bit touchy we'll see. But you know, education is very important to me as it was to my late husband. It's important to my kids. I hope it's important to you, I assume it is, you're sitting here in a classroom, you're learning something. It's not always easy and you know, one of the things he (Charles) taught me was that there's a great resilience of human spirit that brings a person to go through what he went through or maybe some of the things that I don't even know about that you've been through or will go through and you know when those things happen, you have to pull out that resilience of human spirit that's in you and get through whatever it is.

47:39 --- 48:20
That's what I'm here to tell you, because it's there. And sometimes we have to call on it I learned survival from him in the sense that when he passed away, I was very down, although my kids were wonderful. It took me going out again and doing the work I do at the Air Force Museum and the other places and six weeks later I had to stand in front of a thousand kids at North Lawn Middle School and talk to them and I had said to the teacher, "I can't do it" and she said "Yes you can," and I did. And they were very sympathetic and nice to me.

48:21 --- 49:09
And one more thing and then I'll ask for questions I think. In--I don't know if this happens as much in college but it does happen going through grade school and high school, that there is often a child in your class that is rather alienated. That nobody pays much attention to, nobody includes that person in the general things that they do. There's now a bench at several schools here, a bench where a child can sit on that bench at lunch time or whatever and that means that they want some company and hope that somebody will come and sit with them or invite them to eat lunch with them or something.

49:10 --- 49:52
So sometimes, you know, it's important to reach out to that person in a way that they don't have to become your best friend, but they need help with just having a friend, somewhat friend and having filled their soul with feeling of being wanted and being liked. That alienated person in some classrooms, in some of our schools in this country, have turned out to be a lot of trouble and I don't have to go into details, you know what I mean. So, sometimes it's good to catch that early on.

49:53 --- 50:52
I'm here to just kind of talk with you and wish that you could all talk to me. The only time I got
that was for 20 years I went to the Troy Detention Center to speak to those kids 13 to 18 who had
committed crimes and it was not---I didn't know the first time I went, I thought "Well, it's like a
half-way house" Oh no. Every door you went through, locked. Everything you brought in, like
me, I had to put in a locker. And there was--it was a definite type of prison. And I got to the
chance to ask those kids---I wasn't allowed later on when the laws that passed that you can't ask
people about themselves much. But I said, "Tell me about yourself:" I didn't say, "Why did you
get here? How did you get here?" And I learned a lot about those kids and their lives and I'll tell
you.

50:53 --- 51:29
Well I said to them, there's nothing I would ever do that would put me in a place on purpose like
this or a prison because I love my freedom too much but when you get out try to find a mentor or
somebody who will have a good influence on you because obviously there were a lot of people
in your lives that weren't such good influences. So, I dropped that to them but when I walked out
I had two feelings: I felt really bad for those kids but I really felt good that I could walk out of
there and be free.

51:30 --- 53:00
Freedom is something very important, especially to someone like me. So, maybe I'll close and
say---I don't know what the next picture was. Oh yeah, these are late husband's parents. The only
picture he had of his mother throughout the war with him. The picture of his father was--I think
the next one might be the picture---yeah. This picture we found in Brazil with distant cousins of
his in an album one night after dinner and he suddenly screamed at me because he had asked all
over the world if somebody had a picture of his father. The second man on the left was his father
and that picture was taken in the early 30s in Poland and sent to relatives, cousins over in Rio in
Brazil. And so we had that picture and it meant the world to him- the world- that he had a picture
of his father and I'd realized my second son looks like that grandfather that he never knew. They
were 30 and 31 (Charles's parents) when they were killed during the Holocaust Imagine! So, all
of that together, all of that together makes me speak out. In hope that you all have a really good
life, I wish you health, happiness and peace All of you. Bless you. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

53:05
[FRYDMAN] Do we have any questions? Yes? Oh, sorry. Yeah, they wanna hear you too.

53:25
[AUDIENCE MEMBER]: Hi, my name is Ladon and I'm the student that Sue gave your book to
So I actually had the opportunity to start reading it and so I have a few questions. And my first
one is: What encourages you to continue to share your story especially after so many years what
keeps you wanting to talk?

[FRYDMAN] Thank you, that's a really good question. Why am I continuing? Because I keep
getting asked Even on my way to the school, a man called me on my cellphone---He's a survivor
but he's got a group of men at his retirement area that get together and he wants me to speak to
them. It's that I'm asked and that I want to fulfill that ask And that I hope I reach somebody, you
know. That I hope that by doing this That we have a better chance of not having things like that
happen. I know that it is happening. I know that there are problems in the world and that one
person can't change that But if we don't where we all try to change things a little bit, then what
hope is there. We have to And I have to do this until I can't anymore. I just--It's what I do.

54:57
[AUDIENCE MEMBER]: I wanna say thank you because to me it is inspiring. In the book you
talked about when your husband first passed, it was kinda difficult to even wanna listen to the
tapes. What kind of clicked for you that made you want to take the tapes and turn it into a book?

55:25
[FRYDMAN]: I knew there was a good story, a knew there was an unusual story that a lot of
people haven't heard, especially a 13 to 17 year old. When the book first came out and my
grandson, the one that's getting married, gave it to one of his friends and his friend said, "Look
what he was doing at 14 and look what we did at 14." But fortunately you didn't have to do that
at 14, what he did. Go into the Warsaw Ghetto, bring food to his aunt and uncle, and get back out
which nobody could do. I mean these were the things, knowing these things made me remember
and say "Somebody's gonna read this book I hope," and lots and lots of people---I have no clue
as to how many people have read this book in the last four years because they give it to other
people to read and that goes on and on. I don't know. But I had to write it and I hope--- Oh, I'm
working with two Wright State students who are seniors in the theater department and the one,
we're doing an audiobook on this book so people can hear it and not have to read it if they don't
want to or if they can't because of their eye site. Or if they're older and young and traveling and
wanna read a book, it's a quick book to read and listen to it. So, I had to find someone who had
an accent similar to his. This young man who has done Polish-Yiddish accent. He got it pretty
close, it's amazing what he's done. So we're almost there, we'll almost have it out there pretty
soon. But it was important.

57:17
[AUDIENCE MEMBER]: My second to last question is why do you think that it is important
outside of museums, books, and stories to keep sharing the legacies of not only your husband but
other survivors?

57:33
[FRYDMAN]: Because occasionally someone not educated or who has some anti Semitism or
whatever will say, "Oh the Holocaust never happened." or "It wasn't as bad as people say." We
have so many testimonies now throughout the world, that's what will answer that question.

57:58
[AUDIENCE MEMBER]: And then my last question, I remember in 8th grade my first
introduction to the Holocaust and what it was was Number the Stars by Lois Lowry. So, my
question is, what are your opinions on that story because I just wanna know?

58:20
[FRYDMAN]: That like many stories is a bit of an allegory you know But there are very few books about the Holocaust that are not worth while in some way or other. Now the Boy in the Stripped Pajamas which a lot of you may have read is an allegory. The truth is the son of a high ranking German officer and a boy who was imprisoned in a death camp it turned out to be could never have never have met at that fence over and over. But the contrast of their two lives is what is important about that book, I think. And that people, young people know, that could have not have happened. They both would have been shot probably. When they were caught people weren't able to go the fences and talk to other people. It wasn't like that. They were under severe guard all the time. But I think most of the books and when we talk about books, and we're in a library, the banning of books was one of the first things the Germans did too. Books that had work and we're seeing that here a little bit and teachers are really upset about it and I think librarians are really upset about it.

59:39
And before we end, I wanna thank Mandy, and Beth, and Maggie for helping and helping me all the time by being here and helping people find the books that they want and setting up the library and being so devoted to it. That's something that we never had before that we have that here now. At Wright State, I did the Faces of the Holocaust which is on YouTube if you wanna watch some of the other survivors, I just finished four more interviewing them and that's something you can watch free and at your own leisure. And there are liberators on there, American soldiers who liberated the camps, and also Righteous Gentiles, a Christian who saved Jews during the war in Holland and even a German exchange student, very interesting with her and a daughter of survivors I mean all of this is knowledge and proof that it really happened and as one soldier said on the tape that they use from Faces of the Holocaust at the Air Force Museum. He said, "I saw terrible things on the battle field." He said, "But what I saw here was terrible and terrible is a mild word." So that pretty much sums up what the liberators went through at 19 through 20 when they came into those places

Any other questions?

1:01:23
[AUDIENCE MEMBER]: Hi, so you were saying that education to you and obviously it is to me as well, we're all education majors. But what was your husband's relationship with education like because 13 to 17 is pretty critical to going to school?

1:01:39
[FRYDMAN]: You're right. I mean---She asked me about my husband's education that ended at 13 when the schools were closed, first to Jewish students then obviously, there was a war, terrible war going on and Poland didn't last very long. Germans took over the whole country My husband and I agreed very much on the fact that education was absolutely important and necessary. Whether its an education in a great facility like Wright State or whether it's part time learning work and learning subjects. What---Y"know my grandmother was a very wise woman. She lived to 102 She said to me, "What you know no one can take away from you." And that's true. What you know no one can take away from you. And what you learn and what you absorb, it increases who you are as a person, I think. You're education majors. That means you will hopefully be a teacher or something like that some day. Administrator or teacher Teachers are
worth so much more than what they're paid and so much more you know. They influence thousands of children in a lifetime of their teaching. So, I have nothing but praise for teachers And I've met some of the best in the years that I've been out there

1:03:10
[AUDIENCE MEMBER]: Would you consider yourself a teacher?

1:03:13
 [FRYDMAN]: Well, someone said to me once--a teacher said, "You're a teacher." And I said, "Not really." and she said "Oh yeah, you are." There's many ways I guess of being a teacher. I guess a good parent is a teacher too. But I teach but I'm not saying you have to do what I say. I'm saying absorb it and make it your own the way you want it. I'm just here to tell stories and hope that some of it sinks in to make your life better. It can actually make your life better to have high ambition, high desires. That's not a political statement, that's not even a moral statement that's just to make you the best who you are. That’s why education is important, I think

Anybody? Yes?

1:04:20
[AUDIENCE MEMBER]: Hi my name is Sierra and I'm a music education student so my question is how--When it comes to, even not just like composers or artists, but also educational theorists or philosophers who had pretty anti-Semitic views or were just openly misogynistic or racist. How do we approach that when educating our students like talking back to the banning books but like even do we just don't include them or how should we--can we separate their work from the person?

1:04:53
[FRYDMAN]: Thank you for that question Some of the people who fled Germany first, believe it or not, were theatre people, musicians, scientists--not many but some. Albert Einstein was one- and people who created, artists. Because they (Germans) came down heavily on the art too To them, a beautiful painting could be subversive and out it goes. There are piles and piles still somewhere in the world of artwork that they banned and so I think that music and art and literature are the other thing that make your life beautiful. You don't have to be a musician to enjoy beautiful music and you don't even have to be an artist to enjoy art So they just spoiled all the wonderful things that country had. The country of Beethoven, and Bach, and Wagner. Some of them were anti-Semitic, yes, you're right and you may find that in your--you know, but you always have to rise above it. Be who you are, bring the best of your music to wherever you are and think that they just don't get it.

1:06:25
That's not the way the world was meant to be We're all different; I see different faces in this room, very different faces in every room and every place where I speak. And that's a good thing. That's a good thing. And we just have to learn to not be so afraid of the "other" and the person who looks or sounds a little different than us because they're being who they are. And they deserve some respect for that or at least, at the very least, "Hi how are you?" Everybody can't be your best friend and you can't be everybody's best friend although I have a girlfriend who thinks
she can be. She's working really hard at that But I think reaching out is very important. And I hope you find a wonderful career in the music field and that you meet only good people because there are a lot of good people in that field, really.

1:07:23
We're trying to put a little bit music into our audiobook. And fortunately the same young man who does the accent also plays the piano. And we just have to find music that is not copyright and that can be used in public domain kind of situation. There's all these things that I've learned which I knew some of from newspaper writing.

Anybody else have a question? We're almost, I think, at our time Yes? Okay we'll keep going as long as there---okay

1:08:11
That's the munitions factory. That's the only munitions factory that's in the story, the real one that I found on the internet. Now believe it or not, there's now a new ammunition's factory in Pionki that is owned by German people They of course, probably weren't even alive during the war. But on Google, there's a 50 year history of that place that doesn't ever mention about slave labors and what went on during the Holocaust period. It's kind of ironic I found But we did have a picture of the old-- This is a farm, there were farms on the edges of the forest that as a matter of fact they sometimes sent my late husband as a young boy, into those places to see, because he didn't look particularly Jewish, to see if there were any Germans around or if the farmers were willing to give them a little bit of food. They sent him ahead as sort of a spy. I don't like that word but yeah to look around, to see what he could see Before the other young men came in. It was very dangerous even in the forest with the Germans surrounding them and he gives a very broad description of one part of the end of the second war, the Russians were on one side of the stolid and the Germans on side, the large river in Poland and you have to read it, he heard it, he heard what was going on and the war--war's not good but war in that sense. But it came to an end and you know what happens at the end of every war, people have to come to the peace table sign peace treaties. Why don't they do that to begin with? Why do we lose so many men to war and women now. We always uses the masculine.

Yes?

1:10:20
[AUDIENCE MEMBER]: My question is what was it like for you once people received or read your story especially like your kids who you said their dad didn't really share like details. What was that like?

1:10:34
[FRYDMAN]: My kids are extremely proud of the book and they gave it to everyone they could that they know. They know the authenticity of it because some of the stories they had heard maybe over a period of time, quite a few. So, I would say that there's a lot of pride that is out there about their father and that we had quite a marriage and family life was terribly important to us and all of that is somewhat in the book But yeah, the kids are really happy that it's out there
[AUDIENCE MEMBER]: Dr. Frydman, I've seen you many times and every time, I have a half a dozen questions to ask you that are different. First, where are Charles's tapes now?

[FRYDMAN]: They're in my house, stored away.

[AUDIENCE MEMBER]: Have you thought about digitizing them? Not that I wanna give you another project.

[FRYDMAN]: There's so many things I've left behind and not done because I had something like today. That's not an excuse but I will do that.

[AUDIENCE MEMBER]: I think you're right, you do need an assistant. Maybe that best girlfriend.

[FRYDMAN]: Actually my daughter is starting to help, the one who did the typing. She is helping me, she is a dozen at the air force with me. She has come on some of the talks with me and she's blonde too--the stereotypes! I just wanted to bring my daughter to classrooms. Because I used to have black hair one time and you know the interesting thing---and this you can use if someone ever argues with you about Hitler. Hitler wanted to create tall, blond, a race of tall, blond, blue eyed people called the Aryan race and that they were born in Germany Hitler himself was short, dark haired, brown eyed and was born in Austria. Now, if that isn't a piece of historic irony I don't know and nobody caught it. Nobody. Sometimes we have to look at the person who is making these impossible statements.

[FRYDMAN]: My husband says in the book that in his small town, the first people that they took to kill were priests, teachers, and educators teachers. They randomly killed people just to kill people And so yeah, I don't think he was afraid he had lost some of that feeling after what he saw.
[AUDIENCE MEMBER]: The stories that my husband's family shares is that large families of course were expected in their faith and that basically they were told, "We have our faith but you will not be a teacher, you will not be a priest, you will not be a nun." Because of the fear.

1:14:48
[FRYDMAN]: Yeah, I believe that. We should say that a number of nuns took Jewish children into convents, and hid them and covered up for them and tried to save them. Some of those children stayed with the Catholic faith and some did not. Some didn't even know they were Jewish until much later in life perhaps. But the fact is their lives were saved. And anyone who saves a life, it's as though they saved the whole world according to the biblical. But people who saved the lives during that time, it was so difficult. We don't know what we would do if someone would come in to our door in, God forbid, war time and say, "Will you hide one or two or three people in your home?" And they're a different religion and if you're found out, you and your family could be killed. And people did that. We had several in the Dayton area that I found. Not because they said, "Here I am, I did this." But I had to search them out, I heard about them. And then I had to beg them almost to tell their stories and some of those stories are really you know there's- there's one on- on faces of Holocaust on YouTube that um Johanna van Schagen and if you had to be hidden by somebody you would have been wanted to be hidden by her because she treated- she saved four Jewish women at time at different times in her home in Holland.

1:16:35
[AUDIENCE MEMBER] and- and I promise I'll- I'll let you sit down soon…

1:16:41
FRYDMAN] Oh that's okay. I don't sit down a lot.

1:16:43
[AUDIENCE MEMBER] I know you don't and she moves very fast okay just so you know um what is your feeling about your ancestral country now? I mean I- I know my- my husband's- I mean they still speak German um and so uh but they never none of them ever returned to Germany.

1:17:07
[FRYDMAN] that's um look at this now this is my and we got that picture in Brazil too. The man standing there is a cousin of his that was a doctor or he was actually the team doctor for the soccer players, including Pele if you know Pele who was a master soccer player. That man because um went back after the war to- he was born there but he was taken out of there very early and he had that sign and- and stood there you know. Later he went to his own late parents- his own parents’ home there that had been their home and he gave that picture the small picture to uh Charlie and that's why we have that picture from and you can see this is after the war. It's still very primitive. I mean it was a very small town and it was, you know, it was primitive and I think so any- any word…

1:18:09
He lived in the town but they had a little yard or whatever they had a cow and they had the chicken and they had a dog um and one of the Germans who came in one time took a man from another house out to shoot him and the dog attacked the German guards and they shot the dog. I
mean you know it - it just but she was um he had worked hard from early on in his hometown helping his mother helping his grandmother carrying water from the little stream there and maybe that made him strong enough to you know...other people were strong and didn't make it so that wasn't alone how strong you were you certainly had to be strong of mind I think physically strong didn't hurt but mentally strong you had to be very strong to withstand all that

so, any other questions?

1:19:12
All right well thank you very much for your listening and for being here and um you know I wish I knew all your stories this is mine and my late husband and um I'll be around Wright State for a while because I love it here and uh the school's been really good to me they let me do the faces of the Holocaust it was supposed to go for six weeks interview a few people a few you know survivors and a couple liberators and after six weeks we hadn't nearly touched the surface and then it needed to be edited from 25 hours down to nine hours for classroom use and it went on for three years and they get and they let me do that right in their space you know so um Wright State's been really good to me and I appreciate that so I wish you all good luck in your in your future life and you're very nice young people and I appreciate you and uh I wish you health, happiness, and peace. Thank you very much.

1:20:25
[Applause] [Music]